ANTICIPATIONS OF "THE ANCIENT MARINER" IN THE EARLY POETRY
OF S. T. COLERIDGE

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to discover in the early poetry of Coleridge anticipations of the poetic excellence exhibited in "The Ancient Mariner." It begins by explaining that the years from 1787, the date of his first recorded poem, to 1798, when he travelled to Germany, may be divided into three periods: 1787 to 1794, the years spent at school and university; 1794 to 1796, the years of his discipleship to two eighteenth-century rationalists, Godwin and Hartley; and 1797 to 1798, the years of his happy fellowship with the Wordsworths. The poetry has markedly different characteristics in each of these periods. The study proceeds by discussing the poetry under three headings: ideas, imagery and symbolism, and form. Noticeable progress towards the degree of achievement found in "The Ancient Mariner" appears in each of these areas.

Chapter One, which discusses Coleridge's ideas, begins by establishing that from 1787 to 1798 the poetry is characterized by attempts to explain and offer a solution for evil and suffering. From 1787 to 1794 Coleridge advocated a simple and trite schoolroom morality, largely based on Church-of-England doctrine. Then he turned to the rationalism of Godwin and Hartley, accepting their concept of necessity, of the mind as a tabula rasa, of private property and institutionalism as the prime sources of evil, and of environment, reason and necessity as forces working toward the perfection of man. Rejecting Godwin's
atheism, he subscribed to Hartley's system, in which these same concepts were placed in a Christian framework. However, disillusioned by the sterility of rationalism, and by the failure of the French Revolution to advance the morality of society, he retired to Nether Stowey in December, 1796, confused in mind and depressed in spirit. There he established a more meaningful concept of morality. It was based on faith in man's mind, as was Godwin's; and was focused on religion, as was Hartley's. But, unlike the system of either master, it found its motivation in will rather than reason. "The Ancient Mariner" embodies this concept of morality.

In Chapter Two the study proceeds by categorizing the imagery and symbolism in "The Ancient Mariner" into three groups, or clusters, and showing that each appears, at least in nucleus, throughout the early poetry. The first cluster, which describes the Mariner, from 1787 to 1794 is associated with poet figures, from 1794 to 1796 is associated with political and social reformers and the spiritually regenerate. In 1797 and 1798 it is associated with individuals who, through an act of self-less will, have achieved a degree of moral and spiritual regeneracy, or who have a mission to enlighten other men. The second cluster is related to the murder of the Albatross. From 1787 to 1794 murder is treated as the inevitable consequence of living in an evil world, as an act committed consciously by men helpless to do otherwise. From 1794 to 1796, murder is treated as an act of self-interest, and of opposition to God, an act which violates the laws of reason and nature. During 1797 and 1798 murder is treated as the inevitable result of a purely sensual mind, in contrast to a spiritual mind. The final cluster, nature imagery and symbolism, is characterized by duality throughout the
early poetry. From 1787 to 1794 the positive and negative aspects of nature describe happiness and unhappiness in Coleridge's personal life, and successes and failures of his poetic imagination. From 1794 to 1796 the duality contrasts the self-centered, ignorant mind to the enlightened, rational mind, which senses divine order in creation. During 1797 and 1798 the dualism contrasts the vision of the sensual man to that of the spiritual man.

Chapter Three discusses the three kinds of form in poetry: external form, technique and internal form. Poetry is differentiated from prose by having pleasure as its immediate end. Pleasure is provided by an intuitive recognition of unity in multeity. Therefore form in poetry must be characterized by unity. External form is the relation of various thoughts and feelings to each other in the framework of a poem. Almost all Coleridge's poems have a well-unified external form. The success of this kind of form is most fully expressed in a poem such as "The Ancient Mariner," in which a unified symbolic level is super-imposed upon a unified narrative level. Technique is the way in which a poet expresses his thoughts and feelings. The various elements of technique - diction, imagery, metre, rhyme and stanza form - are well unified when they are the best and most natural expression of the poet's thoughts and feelings, and therefore mutually support and explain each other. The technique of the early poetry is noticeably weak; its mastery in "The Ancient Mariner" is the product of ten years of apprenticeship. Internal form is the proportion between the degree of thought and the degree of feeling in a poem. In all good poems thought and feeling give rise to and balance each
other; they are unified. The greatest and best poems contain deep thought - a sense of spirituality in the midst of social and political reform - and deep feeling - a love which concerns itself with the changes in individual men. Deep thought and deep feeling can occur only with the achievement of the ultimate end of poetry: moral or intellectual truth. The poetry of 1787 to 1794 is characterized by an overbalance of feeling, that of 1794 to 1796, by an overbalance of thought. "The Ancient Mariner" contains a fusion of deep thought and deep feeling conveyed on the symbolic level. Enchanting the reader through the pleasure yielded by the perfect harmony of all the parts, and suggesting to him through symbolic patterns that it contains deep truths of human experience, the poem draws him back into itself, that he might discover these truths, find greater unity, and achieve more pleasure.
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INTRODUCTION

There are three convenient chronological divisions in Coleridge's early writing. The first extends from 1787, the date of his first recorded poem, to the spring of 1794, when he was discharged from the Dragoons. This date terminates his school years and marks the beginning of his serious concern with poetry. The second period runs through to Christmas, 1796, when he retired to Nether Stowey, depressed in spirit and confused in thought. At this time he was convinced that most of the religious and political theories he had been expounding so eagerly had come to naught.¹ The third period extends to his departure for Germany, in 1798. This period includes the happy months of communion with Wordsworth, the ones in which his major concepts were developed and his greatest poetry written. During this time Coleridge began to achieve a mastery of thought and expression not found in his earlier work. A careful study of the writings of these three periods may help to explain his sudden burst of poetic excellence.

There are several reasons why "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is a suitable focal point for a study of Coleridge's early work.² It is the best known of his works, and more obviously a self-contained unity than either "Kubla Khan" or "Christabel," which are sometimes

¹This analysis of his state of mind is his own. See Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross (London, 1907), I, 132.

²Hereafter the poem will be referred to by the more commonly used title, "The Ancient Mariner"
linked with it as the three greatest of his poems. It was written between November, 1797, and May, 1798, during which time most of his other great poems - "Kubla Khan," "Christabel," "Frost at Midnight," "France: an Ode" and "Fears in Solitude" - were conceived, and therefore was likely a product of the same mysterious forces as these other masterpieces. Moreover, according to the claim of John Danby, the Mariner is Coleridge's *homo viator*. If this is true, then the poem contains his most basic ideas. Other poems which he wrote during 1797 and 1798 will be compared to "The Ancient Mariner" in order to show the consistency in his religious, political, sociological and aesthetic concepts.

Three convenient headings under which Coleridge's early work may be discussed are ideas, imagery and symbolism, and form. It is particularly difficult to assess Coleridge's thought between 1787 and 1798, not only because of frequent changes, but also because his ideas were often vague and self-contradictory, and his expression awkward. As his concepts became more distinct and less contradictory, his poetry improved. The poetry of 1797 and 1798 is outstanding in its mastery of imagery and symbolism. Therefore a major part of the analysis of his early work will be concerned with his progress in this area. Coleridge himself said, "an idea, in the highest sense of that word, cannot be conveyed but by a symbol." It is probable that his imagery and symbolism are closely related to his ideas. A final chapter will deal with the changes in his poetic form between 1787 and 1798 in order to discover why he used the ballad form and to

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4 *Biographia Literaria*, I, 100.
trace the germination of his concepts of diction, of the role of
pleasure and truth in poetry and of poetic unity. The ultimate
purpose of each chapter is to discover the nature of, and the
reasons for, those changes in his work which resulted in the sudden
blossoming of his poetry from mediocrity to excellence.
COLERIDGE'S SEARCH FOR A SCIENCE OF LIFE

Coleridge's writings from 1787 to 1798 are the record of a search for a solution to the problem of evil and suffering. Not until he wrote "The Ancient Mariner" in 1798 did he find a concept of morality which satisfied his religious sensibilities and also offered an explanation of the nature of man and the universe both theoretically and practically valid.

A brief summary of some major poems and of the dramas will indicate his concern with evil and suffering throughout the ten years prior to the composition of "The Ancient Mariner." "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" describes the social poverty and political oppression which Chatterton struggled against, and concludes with the hope that generosity, liberty and Christian faith will prevail. "Religious Musings" argues that "the present state of society" - the excesses of the French Revolution and the plight of the masses - is the result of private property, and anticipates the day when:

... each heart
Self-governed, the vast family of Love
Raised from the common earth by common toil [shall]
Enjoy the equal produce. 1

"Fears in Solitude" also discusses the evils of the Revolution, but looks for relief through a change in the hearts and minds of individual men, rather than through a change in government. Both

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dramas written between 1787 and 1798 deal with evil and suffering. The *Fall of Robespierre* is an expose of the atrocities of the Revolution and the degradation of its organizers, while *Osorio* is a psychological study of a murderer and of the process leading to his repentance. A survey of the rest of Coleridge's early writings will confirm that he focuses his interest on the evil which is in the world, the suffering which man endures, and various means of achieving relief.

In his search for a solution to the troubles of the world Coleridge first explored the answers which the eighteenth century offered: the concepts of faith, virtue and contentment piously advocated by headmasters during daily chapel sermons, and then the rationalism of such men as Godwin, Priestley and Hartley. Choosing the best of each system he explored, and never quite abandoning his religious inclinations, he finally discovered a set of ideas regarding the nature of God, the nature of man and the value of love which satisfied both heart and intellect. Danby states that before leaving for Germany in September, 1798, Coleridge had established the basic concepts upon which he was to build his later philosophical theories.²

Of the poems written before Coleridge left Cambridge in the spring of 1794, about seventy percent discuss evil and suffering. Many of these, such as "Pain," "Genevieve" and "Quae Nocent Docent," only poeticize his personal difficulties: loneliness, illness and

² *Anima Naturaliter*, p. 22.
moral weakness. These personal poems are uniformly gloomy, filled with such lamentations as "Better to die than live and not be loved!" "Ah what can all Life's gilded scenes avail?" and "Ahi! that once more I were a careless child!" Other less personal poems discuss the causes and solutions of suffering. They speak of three sources of suffering: absence of love, social diseases such as poverty and oppression, and ambition. For instance, "Nil Pejus Est Caelibe Vitae" discusses the tragic loneliness of bachelorhood, and "Anthem" attributes vice in orphaned children to their unloved condition. "Anthem," "Destruction of The Bastille" and "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" all decry the misery, vice, and degradation which result from continual poverty and political tyranny. "Happiness," "A Wish" and "Ye Gales that of the Lark's Repose" affirm that ambition for personal pleasure, fortune and glory always leads to disappointment, disease, care and servility. Without ambition a youth is more likely to find pleasure, friendship, and contentment.

The ideas which appear in these poems reflect the trite moralizing to which Coleridge must have been subjected in daily chapel-lessons. The theme of "Easter Holidays," "Progress of Vice" and "Sonnet on Quitting School" is that all men are born into a world of evil and woe, and that everyone falls from innocence into sin. He does not believe that complete happiness can be found until death, and says that man must be content to endure present troubles with the aid of "virtue," "wisdom" and "contentment." His ultimate hope is for joy in heaven;

3 Poems, p. 20, l. 14; p. 17, l. 18; p. 48, l. 15.
he asserts, "Faith proclaims 'Thou shalt not die!'"\textsuperscript{4} Not until 1794, when introduced to Godwin's \textit{Political Justice}, did Coleridge abandon these concepts for an optimistic faith that man through reason is able to attain perfection and happiness in this world.

Although the early poems which deal with evil and suffering are superficial in thought, and tend to speak in abstract terms of very general concepts rather than to make precise analyses of particular problems, they do reveal that Coleridge was oppressed with the state of his society, and was seeking a means of relief from the suffering which he experienced and which he saw around him.

Those poems written prior to 1794 which do not deal with evil and suffering - about thirty percent of the total volume - have a buoyancy and enthusiasm not evident in the poems of the larger group. They are humorous poems, such as "Julia" and "The Nose," or poems about poetry, such as "To the Muse" and "An Effusion at Evening," or love lyrics, such as "The Rose" and "Kisses." In these poems Coleridge is confident of his own poetical powers and is searching for something to write about. In "Songs of the Pixies" he speaks of himself as "A Youthful Bard, 'unknown to Fame,'" who "wooes the Queen of Solemn Thought."\textsuperscript{5} He pursues "Imagination," who will "aid the Poet's dream" in "An Effusion at Evening," but because he is "lost by storms along Life's wild'ring way" he finds that his poetic powers

\textsuperscript{4}\textit{Poems}, pp. 30 - 33.

\textsuperscript{5}\textit{Poems}, p. 42,11. 36-37.
leave him. These "storms" were undoubtedly his personal problems, which robbed him of much of his youthful optimism and self-confidence. In 1794 he was to find in poetry a tool for the advancement of "serious Truth." Then his natural zest for life was to express itself in enthusiasm for the various schemes of men who tried to explain evil and suffering. Meanwhile his most successful poems were those in which he did not mention the troubles of the world, nor the trite moralizing of his age. In them his lyrical powers found expression, unhindered by shallow morality or melancholy. "An Ode in the Manner of Anacreon" is one of the lyrics which comes closest to success:

As late, in wreaths, gay flowers I bound,
Beneath some roses Love I found:
And by his little frolic pinion
As quick as thought I seized the minion.

Then in my cup the prisoner threw,
And drank him in its sparkling dew:
And sure I feel my angry guest
Fluttering his wings within my breast.

Coleridge later said that of his early poems these light, frivolous ones were least distasteful, for they led the reader to anticipate nothing. In the winter of 1793 and spring of 1794 a series of misfortunes combined to make a profound impression on Coleridge, who was then twenty-two years of age. He had cultivated unwise friendships at

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6 Poems, p. 49-50, ll. 1, 14, 43.

7 He makes this analysis of his sense of purpose in a motto to the section of "Religious Musings" which he published in The Watchman, No. 11, March 9, 1796. See Poems, p.108n.

Cambridge, wasted much time partying, and run heavily into debt. Slothfulness and ill health prevented him from obtaining a coveted scholarship. Furthermore, he learned that Mary Evans, with whom he had been long in love, was engaged to another man. Overwhelmed with shame for his misbehaviour, hopeless love, and fear of his debtors, he joined the Dragoons under an alias. His physical and mental unsuitability for army life destroyed his remaining self-respect, and he became seriously ill. When his brother George and a few friends managed to extricate him from the Dragoons, he was a much chastened young man. He wrote: "I have been ... the dupe of my Imagination, the slave of impulse, the child of Error and Imbecillity." His state of mind made him susceptible to Godwinian Necessitarianism, which blamed evil and suffering on man’s past environment rather than on personal weakness, and which had an optimistic faith in the perfectibility of man through reason.

The writings of Coleridge between summer, 1794, and spring, 1797, are distinguished from those prior to 1794 by their enthusiastic propagation of various systems through which he hopes evil and suffering can be overcome. Earlier he had resigned himself to patient endurance until death, now he anticipates the day when man will arrive at moral perfection.

Shortly after his release from the Dragoons Coleridge met Southey, who introduced him to Godwin’s Political Justice. On Godwinian principles the two based their Pantisocracy scheme, persuading several others of the

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9Letters, I, 73.
value of establishing a new society in North America. The arguments which appear in Coleridge's letters defending the scheme represent the first major step in his progress toward the concepts of evil and the importance of the mind in overcoming it which he held in 1798, although by then he was to abandon many of the Godwinian beliefs. In fact his faith in Pantisocracy lasted for little more than eight months and by Christmas, 1794, he had begun to reject Godwin's teachings.

In discussing the principles of Pantisocracy Coleridge suggests that man is not doomed to ignorance, vice and degradation, that the world need not be a place of evil, and that death is not the only escape from unhappiness. He asserts that a combination of reason and of the influence of a "natural" environment, one free from the vices of society, will lead man to moral perfection and happiness. This vision is based on the assumption that man is born without any predisposition for good or evil, that his mind is formed by the sum of the impressions made on it by external environment, and therefore that under the right environmental conditions man will necessarily become virtuous. Virtue is defined as that which contributes to the good of all mankind, and the good of the group is assumed also to be the good of the individual. Therefore evil in the individual is anything which detracts from the good of the group, anything which is not love, and evil in society is that which hinders the progress of the mind of man towards perfection. As all men are endowed with the instinct of self-preservation, a rational understanding of the relation between the good of the individual and the good of the group
will eliminate personal evil. The Pantisocratic environment, established
in a North American location which is free from the perversions of estab­
lished European society and therefore "natural," would be conducive to
the perfecting of the mind.

In a letter defending Pantisocracy Coleridge says:

The leading idea of Pantisocracy is to make man necessarily
virtuous by removing all motive to Evil - all possible
Temptation.10

In agreement with Godwin, Coleridge recognized two prime causes of evil:
private property and institutionalism. Private property encourages
selfishness, which is opposed to the good of the group. The founders
of the North American scheme said they would attempt:

   to remove the selfish Principle from ourselves, and to
   prevent it in our children, by an Abolition of Property;
   in whatever respects this might be impracticable, by
   such similarity of Property as would amount to a moral
   Sameness, and answer all the purposes of Abolition.11

Apart from private property, institutions are the greatest hindrance to
the perfection of man, for institutions, whether political, religious
or educational, tend to be static and restrictive, hindering progress.
Accordingly, Coleridge names the new society "Pantisocracy," for it will
be a state in which "all rule equally." In this state there will not
only be no formal government, but also no formal religion; in fact the
name of God will not even be mentioned, lest it establish in the minds
of children any false concept of the Deity.12 The word obedience is to

10Letters, I, 114.
11Letters, I, 163.
12Letters, I, 120, 123.
be banished from their vocabulary, for the individual must never be under restrictions imposed by other men, lest the progress of his mind be hindered.¹³

Having removed the motives for evil, the Pantisocrats substitute the Godwinian motive for good. In a paraphrase of Godwin, Coleridge says:

> All necessary knowledge in the Branch of Ethics is comprised in the word Justice — that the Good of the Whole is the Good of each Individual. Of course it is each Individual's duty to be Just, because it is his Interest. ... [this] requires the most wakeful attentions of the most reflective minds in all moments to bring it into practice.¹⁴

Assuming, with Godwin, that once individuals recognize that the best way to benefit themselves is to benefit the group, they will become moral, Coleridge places his hope for the perfection of man in the power of reason to discover this truth and to find ways of implementing it. That men are not motivated entirely by reason he does not yet seem to realize, although the last line of the above quotation suggests that he is not completely convinced of the infallibility of his argument.

Godwin believed not only that man is capable of moral perfection but also that the world is steadily progressing toward perfection.¹⁵ Coleridge adopts this aspect of Necessitarianism, believing that truth and goodness will finally prevail. He says that he is "a Necessitarian — and (believing in an all-loving Omnipotence) an Optimist."¹⁶ However,

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¹³ _Letters, I_, 120.

¹⁴ _Letters, I_, 115.


¹⁶ _Letters, I_, 145.
his optimism for the future does not prevent him from assisting the process of perfection. He believes that elimination of the prejudices, errors and restrictive institutions of European society from Pantisocracy will allow for the maximum positive effect of the "natural" world upon the mind.\textsuperscript{17} His confidence in the value of the natural world rests on the thesis that it is free from evil. A notebook jotting says:

\begin{quote}
Affliction cometh not forth from the dust, neither doth trouble spring from the ground. Job V.6.
The good man is in league with all nature. Job V.23.
For thou writest bitter things against me and makest me to possess the iniquities of my Youth. Job XIII.26.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

These texts imply that evil and suffering do not spring from nature, but are the result of our own misdeeds. He states his belief that the "natural" world has a beneficial effect on the mind even more clearly in a letter of March, 1795.

\begin{quote}
The pleasures which we receive from rural beauties, are of little Consequence compared with the Moral Effect of these pleasures - beholding constantly the Best possible we at last become ourselves the best possible. In the country, all around us smile Good and Beauty - and the Images of this divine κακαγεγεγραμμένα are miniaturised on the mind of the beholder, as a Landscape on a Convex Mirror.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

According to Coleridge's Necessitarianism, because reason and environment are the only determining factors in the growth of the mind, the "natural" and therefore good environment of Pantisocracy, together with the "wakeful attentions" of the mind to Godwinian principles, will make men "necessarily virtuous." The poems "Pantisocracy,"

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{17}Letters, I, 119.
\textsuperscript{19}Letters, I, 154.
\end{flushright}
"On the Prospect of Establishing a Pantisocracy in America," "Song of Adelaide" and "To the Rev. W. J. Hort" each anticipate the "Content and Bliss" which will abound in the "rude romantic glens" of North America, isolated from the folly of European society.

Coleridge's belief that the natural world is free from evil conflicts with his tabula rasa concept of the mind: if man is born without evil inclinations and the natural world contains no evil, whence does evil arise? By 1798 he was to alter his concept of the mind, accepting the importance of man's will as a determining factor in morality. The belief that suffering is directly related to man's misdeeds he was to retain: the Mariner's shooting of the Albatross resulted in suffering for both Mariner and crew.

To Godwin Coleridge owes several other concepts. Through him he first gained a belief that evil and suffering can be overcome during this present life, and need not be endured until death. Godwin also taught him that evil must be fought by changing the mind's attitude toward itself and others, and that the good of others is intertwined with the good of the self. Finally, through Godwin he may first have discovered his faith, as explained in "Fears in Solitude," that the natural world has a profound influence on the growth of the mind.

By the late fall of 1794 Coleridge's enthusiasm for the Pantisocracy scheme began to weaken. In a letter he admits that the plan will be successful only if there is a required amount of virtue in the originators. Here difficulties arose, for members

20 Letters, I, 119.
of the group disagreed so violently that Pantisocracy was finally abandoned. Coleridge lists two main weaknesses of the plan, saying that it is "a scheme of virtue impracticable and romantic," and that it is selfish and escapist. In "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," he says that while retreat from society to the seclusion and peacefulness of rural life is delightful, it does little to meliorate the sufferings of mankind:

Was it right,  
While my unnumber'd brethren toil'd and bled,  
That I should dream away the entrusted hours  
On rose-leaf bed, pampering the coward heart  
With feelings all too delicate for use?  

...  
I therefore go, and join head, heart and hand,  
Active and firm, to fight the bloodless fight  
Of Science, Freedom and the Truth in Christ.

He wrote the poem during his honeymoon, and was referring first of all to the selfishness of that retreat. His uneasiness may have been occasioned partly because he had married under pressure from friends, for after his engagement he lamented that he had mistaken "the ebullience of schematism for affection." The absence of love probably contributed to his eagerness to involve himself in other activities. In any case, he takes the occasion to comment on true humanitarianism. The poem, first entitled "On Entering into Active Life," explains the change in attitude which took place when he lost interest in Pantisocracy.

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21 Letters, I, 185.
23 Letters, I, 132.
Having rejected Pantisocracy, Coleridge did not reject all the principles upon which it was established. Until 1796 he continued a Necessitarian, accepting the two Godwinian principles: the tabula rasa concept of the mind, and the optimistic belief that the world is undergoing a long-term process of perfection. He says:

A Necessitarian, I cannot possibly dis esteem a man for his religious or anti-religious Opinions - and as an Optimist I feel diminished concern. - I have studied the subject deeply and widely; ... when I commenced the Examination I was an Infidel.24

The last part of the statement is a reference to his brief acceptance of Godwinian atheism in the summer of 1794. About the same time he says: "Guilt is out of the question - I am a Necessarian, and of course deny the possibility of it."25 That is, he still believed that man's moral condition is the result of the impressions made upon him by environment. As morality is determined by environment rather than will, guilt, or moral responsibility, is nonexistent. Unable to move the whole of society to a more suitable environment, Coleridge decided to purify the environment in which he found himself, and therefore enlisted "Science, Freedom and the Truth in Christ" in his campaign against evil.

The most important area of expansion in Coleridge's ideas during 1795 and 1796 was religion. He became a follower of Priestley (one of the founders of Unitarianism), preached frequently, and almost became a minister. Godwin, an atheist, had stated that man's reason would

24Letters, I, 205.

enable him to overcome evil. Coleridge had seemed to assent, and throughout the height of his enthusiasm for Pantisocracy made very little mention of God or Christ, going so far as to forbid the mention of God in Pantisocracy, lest religious authoritarianism should arise. However, by the fall of 1794, he began to attack Godwin's atheism, and switched his allegiance to Hartley, "that great master of Christian Philosophy." In December, 1794, "Religious Musings" was begun. The poem attempts a rational explanation of the cause of evil and the means of overcoming it through religion; it embodies most of the concepts Coleridge developed during 1795 and 1796. On it he based all his hope for fame.26

In the poetry and letters of 1796 there appears a strange duality which is an indication of his eclecticism. In *Biographia Literaria* he makes a brief reference to the duality as a simultaneous rationalism and mysticism.27 He admired Hartley as a "Christian philosopher," and himself desperately attempted to rationalize the orthodox Christianity of his youth. One evidence of the dualism is in "The Eolian Harp," where he attempts to explain the workings of God in the animate world, then suddenly says:

[Sara] Well hast thou said and holily disprais'd
These shapings of the unregenerate mind;
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain Philosophy's eye-babbling spring.
For never guiltless may I speak of him,
The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
I praise him, and with Faith that inly feels,
Who with his saving mercies healed me,
A sinful and most miserable man.28

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26Letters, I, 197.
27Biographia Literaria, I, 98.
28Poems, p. 102, ll. 54-62.
The predicament is one he never escaped during these years. Although in various letters and poems he paid tribute to such orthodox doctrines as those of original sin, the atonement, salvation through faith, divine revelation and the immortality of the soul, he continually attempted to establish a rational basis for his Christianity according to the concepts of Necessitarianism and Associationism. Pope's limitation of the intellect and reason and his "Chain of Being" concept Coleridge would never accept. For instance, he says at one moment that man is "regenerate through faith," and at the next that faith comes by seeing God in nature, or by divine election, in which man is "attracted and absorbed" to God in a Necessitarian process. He says that he is "A sinful and most miserable man," and that belief in Christ is "for all the evil I have committed, my gracious Pardon," but also that guilt is non-existent, and that man is a product of environment. Many of the problems fell away in 1797 when he recognized the difference between scientific truth and moral truth.

The basis of Coleridge's concept of the Universe during 1795 and 1796 is that God is "Nature's essence, mind and energy," and that natural objects bear the "True impress each of their creating Sire." God imposes on the world an order and unity in which man has a place. Coleridge believes that

'Tis the sublime of man,
Our noontide Majesty, to know ourselves
Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole!

... But 'tis God
Diffused through all, that doth make all one whole.

29 Letters, I, 235.

30 Poems, p. 111, l.49; p. 109, l.16. Hereafter longer quotations from "Religious Musings" will be indicated by the abbreviation R.M., followed by line references. "The Destiny of Nations" will be abbreviated to D.N.
As in the days of Pantisocracy, he finds no evil inherent in the natural world. If man believes he sees evil, it is because his vision is incomplete. Those who recognize God's handiwork:

\[
\text{dare know of what may seem deform} \\
\text{The Supreme Fair sole operant: in whose sight} \\
\text{All things are pure, his strong controlling love} \\
\text{Alike from all educing perfect good.} \\
\text{- R.M. ll. 55-58.}
\]

This concept of God as the motive force of the universe appears also in "The Eolian Harp," where Coleridge says:

\[
\text{And what if all of animated nature} \\
\text{Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd,} \\
\text{That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps} \\
\text{Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,} \\
\text{At once the Soul of each and God of all?} \\
\text{-ll. 44-48.}
\]

In "Reflections" also occurs the idea that God inhabits and controls the world. Coleridge relates the experience of climbing a mountain and looking out over a landscape which "seem'd like Omnipresence."

"Destiny of Nations" describes God as the:

\[
\text{All-conscious Presence of the Universe!} \\
\text{Nature's vast, ever-acting Energy!} \\
\text{In will, in deed, Impulse of All to All.} \\
\text{- D.N. ll. 460-462.}
\]

These lines foreshadow the Mariner's statement that "the dear God who loveth us, / He made and loveth all."

Man can achieve happiness on earth only if he recognizes the importance of God in the world. His ultimate purpose is no longer merely to enjoy a Pantisocratic environment which will be conducive to the perfection of his mind; he must reach union with God, "whose most holy name is Love." Man must be:

\[31\text{Poems, p. 113, l. 106.}\]
From Hope and firmer Faith to perfect Love
Attracted and absorbed: and centered there
God only to behold, and know and feel,
Till by exclusive consciousness of God
All self-annihilated [he] shall make
God [his] identity: God all in all!
We and our Father one.

- R.M. ll. 39-45.

The process has Necessitarian overtones, for man is "attracted and absorbed." Christ and the natural world are the agents of the process, for as symbols of God they can lead man to him. Here any mention of the atonement, a mystical concept, is notably absent. Coleridge is more explicit about the process in "Destiny of Nations," saying:

For all that meets the bodily sense I deem
Symbolical, one mighty alphabet
For infant minds; and we in this low world
Placed with our backs to bright Reality,
That we may learn with young, unwounded ken
The substance from its shadow.

- D.N. ll. 18-23.

The man who becomes "self-annihilated" loves all nature and his fellows. In the words of "Religious Musings" he who achieves union with God, who is Love,

from his small particular orbit flies
With blest outstarting! From himself he flies,
Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze
Views all creation; and he loves it all,
And blesses it, and calls it very good


Here appears a foreshadowing of the Mariner's response to the sea-snakes and to the natural world after "some kind saint took pity" on him. The recognition of divine order and unity in the world and of man's place in this unity, causes men to love each other; "this fraternizes man, this constitutes/ Our charities and our bearing."32

32 Poems, p. 114, ll. 129-130.
Here is an anticipation of the Mariner's enjoyment of good fellowship at church. However, by 1798 Coleridge will recognize the place of individual will in the process of regeneration.

Coleridge now explains evil and suffering as failure to recognize God. Unaware that God is "the moral world's cohesion," society becomes:

An Anarchy of Spirits! Toy-bewitched,
Made blind by lusts, disherited of Soul,
No common centre Man, no common sire
Knoweth! A sordid, solitary thing,

... Feeling himself, his own low self the whole.
- R.M. ll. 146-149, 152.

Rather than accept the concept of original sin, he explains that private property is the cause of man's obliviousness of God, for it makes him self-centered. It leads him to avarice, then luxury, then to war and exploitation of the weak. Society cannot be directed to God through the agency of nature, for the oppressors are too self-concerned to notice God's handiwork, the oppressed do not have freedom to grow as nature directs.

Coleridge plans to combat evil on the three fronts of "Science, Freedom, and the Truth in Christ," that is, science, politics, and religion. An examination of his few and vague statements on science and politics shows that he conceives their value in terms of his religious vision, again combining abstract scientific truth with religious or moral truth.

He gives science a distinct role in the evolution of the mind from innocence, or "vacancy," to the state of perfection, in which man

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33Poems, p. 117, l. 224.
is "self-annihilated" in God and morally virtuous. His explanation is that imagination first stimulated the vacant minds of primitive men to "a host of new desires." Private property soon arose, then "the inventive arts" and luxury; vices, diseases, and "all the sore ills that vex and desolate our mortal life" followed.  

Their keen necessities
To ceaseless action goading human thought
Have made Earth's reasoning animal her Lord.

... From Avarice thus, from Luxury and War
Sprang heavenly Science; and from Science Freedom.

The purpose of Science is to discover natural laws and make them useful to society - or, in other words, to discover the order and unity which God has imposed on the universe, to reveal God to man. Coleridge believes that the world is steadily progressing toward a state of perfection, and that such scientists as Newton, Hartley and Priestley, all avowed Christians, have contributed to this progress. There will come "a fated day" - the Millennium - when the forces of good will finally overthrow evil, when great men will amass to

o'er the wild and wavy chaos rush
And tame the outrageous mass, with plastic might
Moulding Confusion to ... perfect forms.

The physical and moral worlds at last will be perfected simultaneously. Then the Hartleys, Priestleys and Newtons will rise again and be honoured for their contributions.  

The strange situation in which private property, a potential source of evil, makes a contribution towards the perfection of man by stimulating

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34 Poems, p. 117, 11. 215-216.
his mind, Coleridge explains through God's power to turn all evil to good. 36

His faith that politics can aid the overthrow of evil is related to his Necessitarianism. Although he is never explicit about his political principles, his letters and poems frequently speak of the value of freedom. In 1795 he wrote a series of political sonnets in praise of various defenders of freedom. In "The Destiny of Nations" he takes up the "Harp of Freedom" as the best instrument wherewith to praise God. The poem ends with the command, "this be thy best omen - Save thy Country." This is the way in which Joan of Arc can contribute to the world's progress toward the Millennium. Freedom makes possible the perfection of the mind by allowing man to respond to the "natural" world, to grow according to the Necessitarian process. Coleridge analyzes the plight of the masses in terms of the breakdown of this process, a breakdown due to tyranny:

Ahl! far removed from all that glads the sense,
From all that softens or ennobles man,
The wretched Many! Bent beneath their loads
They gape at pageant Power, nor recognize
Their cots' transmuted plunder! From the tree
Of Knowledge, ere the vernal sap had risen
Rudely disbranched.

- R.M. 11. 260-266.

By political force the masses have been deprived of the "natural" environment of rural life, which is the tree of Knowledge, whose fruit is able to perfect their moral beings. They are "bent beneath

their loads" and cannot respond to nature's influence. The importance of being free to respond to nature is explained in "The Destiny of Nations:"

For what is Freedom but the unfettered use
Of all the powers which God for use had given?
But chiefly this, him First, him Last to view
Through meaner powers and secondary things
Effulgent, as through clouds that veil his blaze.
For all that meets the bodily sense I deem
Symbolical, one mighty alphabet
For infant minds; and we in this low world
Placed with our backs to bright Reality,
That we may learn with young unwounded ken
The substance from its shadow.

-D.N. ll. 13-23.

To deny freedom is therefore to deny the means of finding God.

In the sonnet to Earl Stanhope, who opposed British intervention in the French Revolution, Coleridge anticipates Stanhope's reception into heaven as a "champion of Freedom and her God." By defending freedom he had defended God. "Ode to the Departing Year" also associates freedom with enjoyment of nature and the discovery of God. Coleridge cries to the "God of Nature" to rise and condemn the "Tyrant-Murderers" of Europe, then laments that England, with its natural beauties, will soon be destroyed and "abandon'd of Heaven" unless it fights for freedom.37

However, in this poem he is disturbed that political freedom has not produced morality. Within months his total outlook was to change.

While composing "The Ancient Mariner" in 1798, Coleridge wrote "France: an Ode" and "Fears in Solitude," in which he also says that his freedom to enjoy natural beauties has led him to love God. However,

by then he no longer believed that whole groups of people would find God through nature if given political freedom. He believed that moral regeneration could only be accomplished in individual minds, and said: "Freedom ... [can not be] realized under any form of human government; but belongs to the individual man, so far as he is pure, and inflamed with the love and adoration of God in Nature." Purity now is the cause rather than the result of "freedom." The change in concept is the result of a clarification in Coleridge's mind between freedom as a political situation and freedom as a state of mind.

In the third of the three areas in which Coleridge proposes to challenge evil, religion, he makes the most significant changes in his ideas. The concept of the Elect which he adopts prepares the way for his later belief that the key to morality lies in the growth of individual minds. According to the Necessitarian principles on which Pantisocracy was based, under a given set of environmental conditions, a given set of results can be expected in the moral development of all men, providing they have a rational understanding of true virtue. This theory is also the basis for Coleridge's faith in science and politics, disciplines which, by making men aware of the principles of order and unity in the universe and by securing freedom for all, ensure moral growth. However, in "Religious Musings" Coleridge speaks of the Elect, a group of people who, although living under the same environmental conditions as the Many, react differently. They recognize God's unifying power in the world, and so love all creation, while the Many do not. Here Coleridge introduces a factor other than environment

38 Poems, p. 244, "Argument" to "France: an Ode."
and reason in the struggle against evil. A confusion arises which persists until he forsakes rationalism. The Elect are "chosen of God" to become "Regenerate through faith," although they attain faith by seeing God in nature. Here Coleridge attempts to combine predestination with association. Some are chosen to respond to environment. He seems to lose confidence that environment can influence all men for good, but rather than abandon association he superimposes election. Those not of the Elect must wait until the Millennium to achieve release from their burdens and to find God. He says:

Rest awhile
Children of Wretchedness!
More groans must rise,
More blood must stream, or ere your wrongs be full.
Yet is the day of Retribution nigh:
The Lamb of God hath opened the fifth seal.
- R.M. ll. 300-304.

When the Many do become perfected it will be because of the intervention of God, not because of the final success of reason and perfection of environment. During the Millennium his ideal world will be realized: there will be no more confusion and strife, no more pain and suffering, and all men will love God and therefore love his creation; atheism will be no more. Meanwhile, the Elect alone are "self-annihilated" in God, even though they live in a "bad world." They see the importance of divine order and love, but cannot impose them on the world until "the fated day." 39

In accepting the concept of the Elect Coleridge takes a major step away from the rationalism and determinism of Godwin and Hartley, and towards the position of "The Ancient Mariner." That is, he recognizes that evil is not always overcome through a rational understanding of

39 Poems, p. 110, l. 43; p. 137, l. 177; p. 118, l. 239.
truth. Stating that morality is related to self-annihilation, he prepares the way for his later differentiation between scientific and moral truth.

In "Religious Musings" Coleridge is ambiguous about both the process by which the Elect become regenerate, and the result of their regeneration. The ambiguity probably is caused by his desire to incorporate both faith and reason as means to solve the problem of evil. He says that the Elect, characterized by a knowledge of God, have attained this knowledge by discovering God either through nature or through the doctrines of Christ. God is "the Great Invisible (by symbols only seen)," and both nature and Christ have a symbolic function. He says:

Fair the high grove, the sea, the sun, the stars: 
True impress each of their creating Sire

[Yet none] E're with such majesty of portraiture
Imag'd the supreme beauty uncreate,
As thou, meek Saviour.  

In a phrase reminiscent of Hartley's associationism, he says that nature, or "all visible things [are] / As steps that upward to their Father's throne / Lead gradual." Man is led to God by surveying nature, the "true impress of [its] creating Sire," and seeing divine power and order there manifested. Christ also directs man to God. Coleridge describes how he:

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40 Poems, p. 109, ll. 9-10.
41 Poems, p. 111, ll. 51-53.
on the thought-benighted Sceptic beamed
Manifest Godhead ...

***
And first by Fear uncharmed the drowséd Soul
Till of its nobler nature it 'gan feel
Dim recollections; and thence soared to Hope.

***
From Hope and firmer Faith to perfect Love
Attracted and absorbed: and centered there
God only to behold, and know, and feel.


The Elect are passive in the latter process, being "attracted and absorbed," finding God through a faith which is given to them. But in the former process they are active, finding God through reason. They "tread beneath their feet all visible things / As steps, that upward ... lead gradual - else nor glorified nor loved." Coleridge does not seem to notice the confusion. A further difficulty is that the Elect cannot love all creation until they gain divine perspective through self-annihilation in God, yet they find God through nature.

An alternate explanation of these ambiguities is that Coleridge conceived of two groups of people: the Elect, who have extraordinary ability to perceive God and to teach other men, and more ordinary men, who become aware of God by gradual processes. The Elect are predestined, others find God through association. However, while solving some problems this interpretation raises others. Who, then, are "the wretched Many" who must wait until the Millennium? Why must they wait while some find God now through association? Furthermore how, then, are we to explain the statement that the Elect "tread beneath their feet all visible things / As steps that upward ... lead gradual?" The reason for the difficulty is most likely that Coleridge himself was uncertain of his concepts, and by trying to explain regeneration as a process of faith, rationalization and association he compounded confusion.
In "The Ancient Mariner" each of the elements here remain, but the vagueness and ambiguities are removed. Instead of saying that the fear-hope-love cycle leading to regeneration is initiated by "the doctrines of Christ," Coleridge says it is initiated by acceptance of guilt. The Mariner says, "Instead of the cross the Albatross / About my neck was hung." The difficulty of determinism and predestination implicit in the concept of the "Elect of heaven," who are "attracted and absorbed," Coleridge overcomes by combining the concepts of free will (for the Mariner retains the bird around his neck, even after the crew die) and divine grace (for "some kind saint took pity" on the Mariner). The role of nature in the regenerative process is also clarified. The Mariner is not gradually led to God by seeing him "imag'd" in nature. At the point of complete selflessness, he is suddenly free to see the sacredness and beauty of all living things, before hidden because he had "filled all things with himself."

In "Religious Musings." and "The Destiny of Nations," Coleridge emphasizes that the process by which the Elect come to a more complete understanding of the unity in the world, whether through nature or the doctrines of Christ, is an enlarging of the mental awarenesses, a change from superstition to reason, from ignorance to understanding. Nature is "one mighty alphabet for infant minds."\(^{42}\) The doctrines of Christ change the "thought-benighted Sceptic" to a man aware that "Life is a vision shadowy of Truth."\(^{43}\) In "The Destiny of Nations" he says

\(^{42}\) Poems, p. 132, 11. 19-20.

\(^{43}\) Poems, p. 110, 1. 30; p. 124 1. 396.
that even primitive people are led towards truth by natural phenomena such as the aurora borealis and violent storms, for these phenomena stimulate them to form superstitions. It is this stimulation of the mind that is the first step to the perception of truth. Explaining the value of superstitions in this process, Coleridge says:

For Fancy is the power
That first unsensualizes the dark mind,
Giving it new delights; and bids it swell
With wild activity; and peopling air,
By obscure fears of Beings invisible,
Emancipates it from the grosser thrall
Of the present impulse, teaching Self-control,
Till Superstition with unconscious hand
Seat Reason on her throne. ... 

Wild phantasies! yet wise,
On the victorious goodness of high God
Teaching reliance, and medicinal hope,
Till from Bethabara northward, heavenly Truth
With gradual steps, winning her difficult way,
Transfer their rude Faith perfected and pure.

- D.N. 11. 80-88, 121-126.

The theory is that evil arises from ignorance of truth. If man is aware of Truth, which lies in God, who is the source of the love, unity and energy underlying creation, man will not contravert Truth. He will be moral.

There is some confusion regarding the nature of truth, confusion resulting from Coleridge's attempts to combine faith and reason as means of overcoming evil. Sometimes he says that the regenerative process produces love, which is moral truth: the doctrines of Christ lead man from fear to hope to faith to love. Other times he says that it produces rational understanding. Pagans find God through a process leading from superstition to reason to scientific truth. He tries to relate the two, saying that an understanding of unity and order in the
world, or of "scientific truth," will lead inevitably to recognition of God and love for him and his creatures. For this reason he believes scientists can contribute to the moral perfection of man. His vision of the Millennium is of a world of "perfect form" as well as perfect love. By an extension of this argument, enlightened intelligence and love are directly proportional. The fallacy is immediately obvious. Hartley tried the same argument. In the first book of his Observations On Man he explained the workings of the mind, and in the second book he explained how these workings lead to God. In "The Ancient Mariner" confusion between moral and scientific truth disappears. By 1798 Coleridge had discovered that the foundation of morals was in the will rather than in the reason. 44

His earlier confusion of moral and scientific truth explains a weakness in his concept of the Elect. Although Coleridge is not too explicit about the Elect, inferences can be drawn which indicate the limitations of his ideas. He would argue that as God is the source of all truth, an understanding of scientific truth leads to God and to moral truth. Therefore it is taken for granted that all intelligent or enlightened people are of the Elect and self-annihilated in God; all "moral" people are also assumed to be of the Elect and worshippers of God. Absorbed in his attempt to discover a relationship between religion, science and morality, Coleridge does not see the conflict of his theories with reality.

When he retired to Nether Stowey, "thoughts all afloat," he had to resolve confusion on three major points before he could find a satisfactory explanation of evil and suffering. First, is evil to be

44Biographia Literaria, I, 135.
overcome through environment, in hope that improved environment will mean improved morality? Or must man's attitude to himself and others change before he can remove evil in society? Does evil originate in man or in his environment? If it is in his environment, why have improved conditions in France and the combination of a beautiful natural setting with a relatively free political situation in Britain not produced moral people? Second, is morality to be arrived at through reason or faith? If through reason, why are not all intellectuals moral, all moral people intellectual? Finally, is regeneration (whether through faith or reason) a deterministic process? If God predestines some, why not all? If reason and nature inevitably lead to truth, why do so few find truth, and those few under the same conditions that leave others blind? When Coleridge realized that the key to morality lies in the human will, he began to resolve these difficulties.

Although Coleridge abandoned Hartley's rationalism and Necessitarianism, he retained several ideas which Hartley emphasized: the belief that God, characterized by love, created and controls the universe, and the belief that morality, or love of all God's creatures, is related to loss of ego. In accepting Hartley's ideas, Coleridge put emphasis on different facets. The Mariner says:

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

Hartley would have said: "He loveth best who prayeth best," making perception of God a prerequisite for morality, and reason the pathway to God. In 1798 Coleridge believes that an act of love, only possible
after loss of ego, is the key to morality.

"Ode to the Departing Year," written just after Coleridge had moved to Nether Stowey, reflects his disillusionment in the power of environment as a factor in moral regeneration. He laments that the English, in spite of political freedom and a beautiful natural setting, have contributed to oppression of the French by opposing the Revolution. He prophesies the downfall of the nation, then says with pessimism and frustration:

Having wail'd my country with a loud lament,
Now I recentre my immortal mind
In the deep Sabbath of meek self-content.  

Now convinced of the futility of attempting to reform the masses, he abandons the cause of "Science, Freedom, and the Truth in Christ." The poem contains none of the enthusiastic zeal of the previous two years, offers no hint of a solution for the evil and suffering which oppress him.

According to Biographia Literaria, the chief topic on his mind during the months of confusion and depression at Nether Stowey was religion and morality. The poetry written during the next two years is largely concerned with the same topic. Osorio is the story of a man who struggled with his sense of guilt. "This Lime-Tree Bower" and "The Nightingale" describe the means whereby the heart is awakened to love and beauty. "Christabel" and "The Wanderings of Cain" reveal the progress of evil in human lives. "Frost at Midnight" speaks of the way in which God "from eternity doth teach / Himself in all, and all things in himself."

"France: an Ode" and "Fears in Solitude" describe the relations between political government and individual morality. Finally, "The Ancient

Poems, p. 168, ll.157-159.
Mariner" is a tale of crime, punishment and regeneration.

Coleridge discovered that the key to religion and morality lay in free will. He says:

I became convinced, that religion, as both the cornerstone and keystone of morality, must have a moral origin: so far at least, that the evidence of its doctrines could not, like the truths of abstract science, be independent of the will.⁴⁶

Here he differentiates between scientific truth and moral truth, between reason and will, clearing the confusion into which he had been led by Godwin and Hartley. In his earlier poems there is a curious co-existence of rationalism and mysticism. For instance, in "The Eolian Harp" he attempts to explain the workings of the "One Spirit," then rejects his "vain philosophy," assuring himself that God, the "Incomprehensible," must only be spoken of "with Faith that inly feels." He was then writing "Religious Musings," in which he describes God as "the Intelligible One."⁴⁷ Although he writes in his personal letters that he is "a complete Necessarian, and therefore [does] not accept the existence of guilt," he describes the Elect as "regenerate through faith." This co-existence of mutually exclusive elements may explain his confession to Lamb that his heart was not in the composition of "Religious Musings."⁴⁸ He says that because of his deeply religious nature and his reading of the mystics he was finally able to overcome the rationalism he had imbibed from eighteenth-century philosophers.

⁴⁶Biographia Literaria, I, 135.
⁴⁷Poems, p. 110, l. 33n.
⁴⁸Poems, p. 78, ll. 1-3.
For the writings of these mystics [Fox, Behmen and Law] acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned within the confines of any single dogmatic system. They contributed to keep alive the heart in the head; gave an indistinct yet stirring and working presentiment, that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of death.\textsuperscript{49}

In Osorio (1797) Coleridge explores determinism and reason versus will as elements of morality, exposing the failure of reason and the importance of will. Osorio murders Albert and mistreats Maria for his own gain. Trying to salve his conscience, he says:

\begin{verbatim}
What have I done but that which Nature destin'd
Or the blind elements stirr'd up within me?
If good were meant, why were we made these beings?

---

Grant it that this hand
Had given a morsel to the hungry worms
Somewhat too early. Where's the guilt in this?\textsuperscript{50}
\end{verbatim}

Because "Nature" and "the blind elements within" seem to dictate self-preservation, Osorio attempts to justify his crime. Coleridge's answer is not, as it was during his Godwinian discipleship, that Osorio does not understand that the best means of self-preservation is through love of others. His answer is Hartleyan, in that he says man must deny his own interests before he can become moral, but non-Hartleyan, in that he says reason and nature cannot lead to this self-denial. Osorio is an evil man because he allows his natural impulses for self-preservation, his selfish ego, to control his actions. In a letter of December, 1796, Coleridge says:

\begin{verbatim}
\textsuperscript{49}Biographia Literaria, I, 98.
\textsuperscript{50}I, ii, 114-116; III, i, 217-220.
\end{verbatim}
The Terrors of the Almighty are the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the Fire that precede the still small voice of his love. The pestilence of our lusts must be scattered, the strong-laid Foundations of our Pride blown up, and the bubble and the chaff of our Vanities burnt, ere we can give ear to the inspeaking Voice of Mercy, 'Why will ye die?'

Ironically, Osorio's willful self-preservation results in misery, for he loses all friends and, "filling all things with himself," cannot even see the beauty in nature which Albert sees. Albert attempts to "save him from himself" by bringing him to repentance, or to loss of selfish ego, in order that he may be able to love and identify with other beings. Only then can true self-realization occur.

Extreme suffering and misery bring Osorio to the point where he desires to die. At that moment, completely selfless, he is able to will a moral act of love. He is brought to "That point / In misery which makes the oppressed man / Regardless of his own life." To this moment every act has been a search for self-gratification. Self-gratification is impossible, however, as long as he opposes the "one life" or the divine order and unity in all nature. Therefore his selfish acts only increase misery as they continue to harm other living things. Osorio loses his selfish will when the "terrors of the Almighty" are so great that life is unendurable. The Mariner, in the same situation, sees the Moon and the stars, and "yearneth towards" them, desiring the freedom and rest they have. Instead of selfishly opposing other beings, he selflessly loves them, for self-love has failed him completely. Similarly, Osorio regrets his selfish deeds, and wishes those he murdered alive again.

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51Letters, I, 267.

52IV, ii, 308-310.
His suffering occurs after he remembers that Albert, whom he killed, was "the very image of Deity," and "would have died to save" him.\(^53\) The Mariner suffers after killing the bird which loved him, and which he had "hailed in God's name" and welcomed "as if it had been a Christian soul." The parallel with the crucifixion is obvious. Osorio and the Mariner, unaware of the implications of their acts, out of self-centredness strike at a creature divinely created and expressing divine love. Only by accepting their guilt can they gain a vision of love.

Coleridge's concept of regeneration, as expressed in 1797 and 1798, depends on his belief that man has a dual nature, consisting of "organs of sense" and "organs of spirit." In *Biographia Literaria* he explains the distinction in detail, saying that through our organs of sense we arrive at scientific truth and experience self-gratification, while through our organs of spirit we discover moral truth.

All the organs of sense are framed for a corresponding world of sense; and we have it. All the organs of spirit are framed for a corresponding world of spirit; though the latter organs are not developed in all alike. But they exist in all, and their first appearance discloses itself in the moral being.\(^54\)

The unregenerate man has not developed his organs of spirit. Wordsworth explains the failure in "Yew-Tree Lines," a poem much admired by Coleridge:

\[
\text{...he, who feels contempt} \\
\text{For any living thing, hath faculties} \\
\text{Which he hath never used.} \quad ^{55}
\]

\(^{53}\) II, i, 104; V, i, 161.

\(^{54}\) *Biographia Literaria*, I, 167.

Guilt is therefore a state of mind. The crew are as guilty as the Mariner, for they approve of his deed because of their selfish pleasure at being relieved from the fog and mist.

Upon the development of the "organs of spirit" depend not only man's morality but also his ability to recognize beauty, his enjoyment of fellowship, and his sense of freedom. "Simple and disinterested goodness" is the first result of this development, goodness arising from absence of self-interest. This goodness occurs because, having ceased to "fill all things with himself," to be "a blind self-worshipper," man can recognize the beauty in God's universe. Osorio, unregenerate, cannot understand Albert's love of nature; to him nature is all "weeds." In "The Wanderings of Cain," Cain, who has not made use of the faculties he has, is terrified by the cool moonlit wood which is so pleasant to his son Enos. In "The Nightingale" the shallow poet figure mistakenly feels that nature is melancholy, for he "makes all gentle sounds tell back the tale / Of his own sorrow." The Mariner, absorbed in his own suffering, sees the ocean as "a still and awful red," filled with "slimy things." Once he wishes to die, losing self-interest and gaining a spiritual vision of the universe, he suddenly sees that the water-snakes are truly beautiful, are "happy living things." He spontaneously blesses that which he recognizes as beautiful.

In "The Nightingale" Coleridge most clearly states why the natural world cannot influence for good an unregenerate man. The poem can be read as an indirect refutation of his earlier belief in the importance of environment in the regenerative process. He says that only by "Surrendering his whole spirit, of his song / And of his fame forgetful"
can he see that nature is "always full of love / And joyance." As long as man is sensual and egocentric, nature cannot teach him, for he "fills all things with himself." As Coleridge says four years later in "Dejection: An Ode," "in our life alone does Nature live: / Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!" Nature does not contribute to the birth of the soul, to the development of the "organs of spirit;" it becomes "full of life and joyance" only after regeneration, for only then can all the "faculties" function properly.

Because the sensual man does not see the beauty of all created things, nor love them, he is lonely, though surrounded with potential friends. In "Religious Musings" Coleridge describes him as

A sordid, solitary thing
Mid countless brethren with a lonely heart,
***
Feeling himself, his own low self the whole.
When he by sacred sympathy might make
The whole one self! Self that no alien knows. 56

Cain finds himself in the middle of a desert, haunted by the ugliness of nature. The Mariner is "Alone, alone, all, all alone, / Alone on a wide, wide sea!" Only after he blesses the beautiful snakes does he see "The upper air burst into life," then return to land, where he finds great delight "To walk together to the Kirk / With a goodly company! / ... / Old men, and babes, and loving friends / And youths and maidens gay!" He identifies himself with all other beings, and therefore would harm no living creature.

The unregenerate man not only fails to will selfless moral acts, he is unconscious that he has the freedom to act one way or another;

56 Poems, p. 114. 11. 149-150, 152-154.
he has no sense of his own moral powers. Everything happens to him, and he always responds in one, undeviating manner - selfishly. In "Fears in Solitude" Coleridge explains that the English "expect all change from change of constituted power," unaware that each individual must act morally. Under no political system can they realize true freedom, as a group, for freedom can be "gratified" and "realized" only by individual men, to the extent that they are pure in heart. Osorio believes he has acted in the only way possible by the force of "that which Nature destin'd / Or the blind elements stirred up within." Motivated only by self-love rather than love of others,

The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,
Slaves by their own compulsion! In made game
They burst their manacles and wear the name
Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain.\

In Biographia Literaria Coleridge makes a statement on the freedom of the "spiritual" man:

The medium by which spirits understand each other, is... the freedom which they possess in common.... Where the spirit of a man is not filled with the consciousness of freedom (were it only from its restlessness, as of one still struggling in bondage) all spiritual intercourse is interrupted, not only with others, but even with himself.... No wonder, that, in the fearful desert of his consciousness, he wearies himself out with empty words, to which no friendly echo answers, either from his own heart, or the heart of a fellow being.

Selfishness chains man, for every sensation, every act, is related only to self. He is lonely because only "self" exists. He cannot see beauty, because "self" fills the universe. Once the Mariner loses his selfish

57 Poems, p. 247, ll. 85-88
58 Biographia Literaria, p. 168
ego, seeks death, and thus becomes free to see and love the water snakes, he is "filled with the consciousness of freedom," and says:

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light - almost
I thought that I had died in sleep
And was a blessed ghost.

Suddenly the upper air bursts into life, the stars dance, the crew are inspirited. The Mariner realizes he can act, so works the ropes, although there is no more breeze now to fill the sails than there was before. In the harbour, he seizes the oars and rows pilot and boy to shore. He then begins his task of teaching others his tale, at great self-expense. Although alone, he is not lonely, for he loves all things. He has exchanged selfish ego, which leads to sterility, for a sense of oneness with all things, which makes possible infinite self-realization.

The experience of regeneration does not occur once but many times in the life of the regenerate. Man is free only "to the extent that he is pure;" this implies that regeneration is a never-ending process. The Mariner says, "He prayeth well who loveth well" but "He prayeth best who loveth best." He himself is seized time after time with "a woeful agony" and made to realize afresh the horror of his deed. His is a "penance of life," but after each experience he is left free; he has a greater love for "All things both great and small," and as the moral stanza implies, deeper communion with God. The crux of the regenerative process is the means of changing will-to-self-preservation to will-to-love. Osorio, Cain and the Mariner became regenerate only when the suffering brought upon themselves by their selfish acts was so intense that they desired to die. Into the vacuum comes a desire to gain the life and freedom possessed by other beings, rather than their own life of suffering. At that moment they love other beings for their life and beauty, they have
The understanding of evil and of the means for overcoming it which Coleridge now possesses is the result of ten years of eclecticism. Sensitive to the suffering he saw about him, from 1786 to 1794, he accepted the doctrines of the Church of England: man, fallen by nature, must endure inevitable evil, cling to virtue and have faith that death is the entrance to heaven. Tiring of the triteness and seeming futility of such a doctrine, he then accepted Godwinism, with its optimistic faith in the perfectibility of man on earth, its belief that man is born without inclinations for evil or good, and that good environment and right reason together can make men morally perfect. Disillusioned with Godwin's atheism and his argument that man must love his neighbour out of self-interest, he turned next to Hartley. However, he retained Godwin's belief that love is necessary for happiness, and that environment and reason lead to moral perfection. He then adopted Hartley's belief that God gives order and unity to the universe, that faith as well as reason will lead man to God, and that love can only occur by "self-annihilation." Finally, he rejected the tabula rasa concept of the mind, believing instead that man's innate selfishness is a prime cause of evil. He also rejected the rationalism of Godwin and Hartley, and began to distinguish between moral and intellectual truth. He discovered that moral truth can be arrived at only by an act of will, of simple and disinterested goodness. This discovery, together with Hartley's belief that God created and loves the universe, is the basis of the concepts present in the poems of 1797 and 1798. Even though man lives in an environment of political freedom and natural beauty, he will not become moral unless he develops his "organs of spirit," becoming "inflamed with the love and adoration of God in nature." He will
then lose his chains of selfish sensuality and will become aware of his freedom to commit acts of "disinterested goodness." He will recognize beauty and love all things both great and small; his sensitivities will expand and his soul will become strong.

"The Ancient Mariner," Coleridge's homo viator, best elucidates these concepts. The Mariner, at first a purely sensual man, casually shoots an Albatross. Accused of bringing harm to others, he accepts the guilt they are eager to evade. Thus the process of his regeneration begins. Enduring great suffering as the result of having harmed one of God's creatures and of having struck out against divine order and divine love, although unwittingly, and increasingly aware of the suffering he has caused others, he repents of his deed and finally seeks death, losing the last traces of self-interest. Then he is freed to see the beauty of God's creatures and to love them. All which was once ugly because in opposition to self is now beautiful, because self now exists only as a part of a greater unity given to the world by a loving Creator. Self is loved only as it partakes of that unity, and therefore opposition cannot arise between two created beings. His experience fills him with a love of all men, gives him greater communion with God, and gives him a mission to teach other men the lesson he has learned - that ideally,

All thoughts, all passions, all delights
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of love,
And feed his sacred flame.

Retelling the tale, and suffering anew each time, he gains another, yet higher vision of that "bigger and better world" of moral truths, otherwise obscured by the details of daily life and by narrow and trifling thoughts. He is given a deeper insight into "the Science of Life."
Chapter 2

Imagery and Symbolism, 1787 - 1798

There are several indications that "The Ancient Mariner" is a highly symbolic poem. First, some objects, such as the sun, moon and wind, are mentioned with compelling repetition. Second, obvious patterns exist: prior to the Mariner's death wish the Moon is always obscured by fog or mist, afterwards it is bright and clear and beautiful; before the death wish the sea is "charmed," rotting and slimy, afterwards it is calm, and filled with happy living things; before the snakes are blessed the Mariner cannot pray, afterwards he finds that "He prayeth well who loveth well / Both man and bird and beast." Finally, in one or two places Coleridge seems to be telling the reader that symbolism exists: the Mariner says, "Instead of the cross, the Albatross / About my neck was hung;" the spectre-woman who wins the Mariner is named Life-in-Death. These suggestions that symbols exist urge the reader to find meanings in the poem on a deeper level than that of the simple narrative.

Other poems seem to contain symbols similar to those in "The Ancient Mariner." For instance, the poet figure in "Kubla Khan" is much like the Mariner: both have wild hair and flashing eyes, both drink dew, both have an aura of magic. The ocean as it appears to the Mariner before his death wish is like the ocean as it appears in Joan of Arc's vision of evil: both are "charmed," have long and pestilent calms, and contain slimy creatures. Coleridge believed that "an idea, in the highest sense of that word, cannot be conveyed but by a symbol." As a few major ideas are common to the important poems of the early years, a study of similarities in the symbolism...

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1\[\text{Poems, p. 140-141, l. 278-316.}\]
2\[\text{Biographia Literaria, I, 100.}\]
of these poems should clarify the implications of the symbols in "The Ancient Mariner."

For the purposes of this study an image will be defined as a vivid graphic representation or description of an object, a person, or a concept, whereas a symbol will be defined as an image which introduces complex mental associations or ideas. That which is an image in Coleridge's early poems could well be a symbol in the later poems. The nectar which the maid Imagination drinks in "Lines on an Autumnal Evening" is associated only with joy, whereas the honey-dew which the poet drinks in "Kubla Khan" is "the milk of Paradise," and implies a spiritual vision of the universe, a knowledge of good and evil, communion with God, supernatural power and divine purpose. That which is a symbol to one person may be only an image to another, who is unaware of its implications. Some readers may not notice that the moon is obscured before the Mariner's death wish, bright and clear after.

It is convenient to classify the images and symbols in "The Ancient Mariner" into three basic clusters or groups: those related to the Mariner as he appears to the Wedding Guest, those related to his murder of the Albatross, and those which are natural objects or natural phenomena. These three clusters include most of the major images and symbols in "The Ancient Mariner" and, in fact, in the early poetry.

Accepting John Danby's analysis of "The Ancient Mariner" as Coleridge's homo viator, we expect the Mariner to be a representative figure: representative, if not of all mankind, at least of the ideal man, who taps his moral and spiritual potential. The Mariner's strange physical characteristics are related to his moral and spiritual attributes. His long grey beard, his age and his "long and lank and brown" figure indicate that he has had difficult experiences and endured much suffering. His glittering eye, which spellbinds
the Wedding-Guest, indicates strength of soul and spirit. The aura of the supernatural which surrounds him suggests that his experiences have been of a spiritual as well as a physical nature, and that he has a vision not possessed by ordinary men. The spiritual nature of his experience is further supported by a fact not immediately obvious to the Wedding Guest; during his sufferings the Mariner endured great thirst, but once forgiven, he was refreshed with dew by "the holy Mother." These characteristics combine to give us a picture of Coleridge's ideal man, a man who in the midst of suffering, has gained a soul. He has developed a higher order of awareness which has given him strength of spirit and sense of purpose.

Because Coleridge's early poetry is the record of a search for an adequate solution to the evil and suffering in the world, a series of figures exist in this poetry which are representative of the various ways of life he conceived to be ideal. In the first period of his work only two figures have an obvious similarity to those appearing in later poems. One is a fairy queen in "Songs of the Pixies," who is pure of soul; the other is Imagination, the poet's mistress in "An Effusion at Evening," who has disappeared because of "storms along Life's wild'ring Way." In the second period, 1794-1796, a number of representative figures appear: the political genius who fights for freedom, the poet who has discovered truth, the Elect, who through self-annihilation in God have a vision of the universe which fills them with love, and Joan of Arc, chosen of God to save her country and bring it one step closer to the Millennium. In the third period, 1797-1798, there are at least three representative or ideal figures other than the Mariner: Albert, in Osorio, who "brings the dead to life again," saving them from themselves by making them accept their guilt; Cain, who because he does not use all his "senses," kills Abel and then suffers until he is ready to sacrifice himself for strangers; and the poet in "Kubla Khan," who has "drunk the milk of
Paradise." The same imagery is used to describe each of these figures — all have wild hair, flashing eyes, an aura of magic and a fondness for dew. But the symbolic implications differ in each because Coleridge's ideas are changing and maturing. Each of these ideal figures represents a step towards the creation of the Mariner figure; each has greater physical, spiritual and moral similarities to him.

In the first period of Coleridge's writing, that prior to 1794, there are two figures which are described with the same imagery as that applied to the Mariner. Both these, one in "Songs of The Pixies" and the other in "An Effusion at Evening," are personifications of the poetic imagination. Neither is in any way presented as a figure who opposes evil. At this point in his work (1793) Coleridge's poetry does not reflect an intensive search for a solution to the problems of the world, although indications exist that he was sensitive to the problems of his day. However, both these figures are ideal figures to Coleridge. He is conscious of his poetic powers, describing himself as "A Youthful Bard, unknown to Fame, ... with Learning's meed not unbestowed," and as searching for the maid Imagination, who in the past has "twin'd a laurel round my brow."² In "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" he desires to use his poetry for lofty purposes, saying:

Grant me, like thee [Chatterton], the lyre to sound,
Like thee, with fire divine to glow.³

In both "Songs of the Pixies" and "An Effusion at Evening" he says that he must find Imagination, personified as a fairy queen, in order to realize his dreams. Imagination is an ideal figure not because she has overcome evil, but because she represents his greatest goal — poetic fame. He as yet has no

² Poems, p. 42, l. 36; p. 51, ll. 18-19.
³ Poems, p. 15, ll. 86-87.
clear concept of what poetry should do, or of what a poet should be like. He merely says that he should "glow with fire divine," have humanitarian qualities, and be "pure in soul." Because his poetry has no clearly defined sense of direction, the figure, who is described in the same imagery as the Mariner, has no clearly defined moral or spiritual qualities.

Several other ideal figures appear in the early poetry, such as Chatterton, who represents humanitarianism and poetic power, and Genevieve, who is loved for her tender heart. However, none of these are described with the cluster of images later used for the Mariner, nor seem to have a special place in Coleridge's development of an ideal.

The four images which are used to describe the fairy queen Imagination in the early poems are used in somewhat the same way as they are in 1797 and 1798. As the Mariner's eyes entrance the Wedding Guest, so her eyes entrance the poet: they have "soul-subduing power" in "Songs of the Pixies" and give her a "soul-entrancing Mien" in "An Effusion at Evening." The dew which she drinks gives her joy: it is "Joy's red nectar" and sets "Chaste Joyance dancing in her bright blue eyes." Similarly, the Mariner drinks a dew which gives him a sense of buoyancy and joy. The magical aura of Imagination indicates she has understanding and powers beyond those of ordinary mortals: she is "veil'd from the ken of grosser sight" and at "the visionary hour" brings "wildly-working dreams" to the poet. Similar to the Mariner, who travels "like night, from land to land," Imagination travels abroad during the night and "meets [the poet's] lonely path in moonbeams clad," bringing to him a "passion-warbled song." The image of flowing hair is not associated with strange experiences, as it is in later poetry. The early appearance

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4Poems, p. 52, 1.51; p. 51, 1.16.
6Poems, p. 49, 1. 30; p. 52, 1. 53.
of this cluster of images in the figure of Imagination indicates that Coleridge had a habit of establishing in his mind a few vivid conceptions, then adapting these to illustrate graphically the ideas embodied in his poems.

The cluster of images used to describe Imagination in 1793 also describes a series of figures in the poems of his second period. By 1794 he was using poetry to propagate "serious truth," and each of the figures in the major poems of the period is a champion of particular truths - the political reformers in "Sonnets on Eminent Characters," the poet in "To a Friend," the Elect in "Religious Musings" and Joan of Arc in "The Destiny of Nations." All have certain moral and spiritual characteristics implied by the images used to describe them.

When he wrote the sonnets in praise of political heroes Coleridge believed that if man was free to respond to nature's influence and to use his reason, he would become morally perfect. Each to whom he pays tribute is a "freedom fighter." Although the complete cluster of images does not apply to any one figure, there seems to be a link in Coleridge's mind between his earlier visual picture of an ideal figure and these political heroes. He says of Godwin: "thro' the windings of [Oppression's] dark machine, / Thy steady eye has shot its glances keen."7 Sheridan's "bosom-probing glance" causes infamous men to tremble.8 Burke achieves his victories with "wizard spell," Godwin

7 Poems, p. 86, ll. 6-7.
8 Poems, p. 88, l. 12.
provides "holy guidance." Perhaps the reason why only one or two images earlier used to describe Imagination are used to describe any one political figure is that during this period Coleridge was less concerned with imagination than with reason. Not until "To a Friend!" in 1796, and more particularly "Kubla Khan" in 1798, does he clearly combine the figures of poet and enlightened teacher. In both these poems the cluster is vivid and has an important role.

Like the Mariner, the poet-figure in "To a Friend" is wild-eyed. He has drunk of a "wizard-fount," thereby attaining a vision and purpose beyond those of "the world's low cares and lying vanities." He has "bounden ministeries" to convey the truths he sees to other men. Coleridge is still vague about the poet's function. But in 1798 he unites the images and function of this poet figure with the images and function of the Elect and Joan of Arc to form the Mariner and the "Kubla Khan" poet.

In "Religious Musings" and "The Destiny of Nations" appear the first fairly complete prototypes of the Mariner. Here Coleridge makes a detailed study of the means for overcoming evil. The Elect in "Religious Musings" and Joan of Arc in "The Destiny of Nations" are similar to the Mariner not only in their appearance and their sense of purpose, but also in their moral concepts. "Religious Musings," the first poem which differentiates between the Elect and the Masses,

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9 Poems, p. 80, l. 8; p. 86, l. 9.
10 Poems, pp. 158-9, ll. 15, 2, 6, 12.
between those with a spiritual vision of the universe and those without, contains no single distinct visual picture of the Elect. However scattered throughout the poem are various images of the Mariner cluster.

The Elect,

Their strong eye darting through the deeds of men,
Adore with steadfast unassuming gaze
Him Nature's essence, mind, and energy!
- R.M. ll. 47-49.

Like the Mariner after regeneration, they have a vision which enables them to see beauty in a world which to others is unlovely. The regenerate man, loving God,

From himself he flies,
Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze
Views all creation; and he loves it all,
And blesses it, and calls it very good!

These lines associate spiritual vision with the eye image, but not spell-binding powers. However, in another passage Coleridge says that the Elect do have power over other men which enables them to "tame the outrageous mass, with plastic might/ Moulding Confusion to ... perfect forms." He is vague about what the power accomplishes, not yet clear in his own mind that evil must be overcome in the minds of individuals before it can be overcome in man's environment. The Elect "tame" society in some unspecified manner; the Mariner teaches a particular lesson to individual men. The Elect also have long "youthful locks," but the image is not emphasized nor associated with extraordinary experiences or wisdom. There is no specific reference to any magical or supernatural atmosphere about them, although they have a

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supernatural vision. The image of dew does appear, and is associated with spiritual life:

... from the crystal river of life
Spring up on freshened wing, ambrosial gales!
The favoured good man in his lonely walk
Perceives them, and his silent spirit drinks
Strange bliss which he shall recognize in heaven.


Two anticipations of the Mariner occur in these lines: the Elect receive "strange bliss" brought by the wind from the river of life, as the Mariner receives dew from "Heaven's mother" and with it new life and joy; they also walk alone, as the regenerate Mariner walks alone. The aloneness in "Religious Musings" is one of the earliest indications of Coleridge's new awareness that morality is acquired by individuals rather than whole peoples.

Joan of Arc in "The Destiny of Nations" is more obviously a prototype of the Mariner than are the Elect. Coleridge for the first time gives a distinct visual picture of a single person who through a notable experience has gained a spiritual vision and a clearly defined mission. The visual picture is vivid:

Her front sublime and broad,
Her flexible eye-brows wildly haired and low,
And her full eye, now bright, now unillumined,
Spake more than Woman's thought.

- D.N. ll. 164-167.

Joan is taken by a "minister of heaven" to a hill-top and given a "Prophet's purged eye" and a vision and explanation of the misery of the world. The vision includes a seascape much like that on which the Mariner suffers. The spirit brings this vision in order that she might gain a sense of mission, and become motivated to save her country from political oppression. Coleridge goes on to describe her as
A dazzling form, broad-bosomed, bold of eye,  
And wild her hair....  
- D. N. 11. 433-434.

He does not say distinctly that there is a supernatural aura about her, although she is spoken to by a "minister of heaven." Nor does the image of dew appear. She is unlike the Mariner in that she is guiltless before she has a vision; however, the vision of both teaches that God's creatures must be loved, and leaves both with a mission. Like the Elect, she must change her people's environment by making France politically free; the Mariner frees individuals from their selfish ego.

In the third period of the early work, 1797-1798, there are three figures which are much like the Mariner: Albert, in Osorio; Cain, in "The Wanderings of Cain;" and the poet, in "Kubla Khan." There are two main reasons for the close similarities. The poems are simpler and more vivid, dealing less with abstractions and containing more visual imagery. Second, Coleridge's ideas were becoming more precise; therefore it is easier to associate particular ideas with each figure.

Two figures in Osorio anticipate the Mariner. Osorio has a state of mind similar to that of the Mariner before the water snakes are blessed. There can be no physical similarities, since the Mariner is described physically only as he appears after his sufferings. Like the Mariner, Osorio is self-centered, and therefore kills; when a sense of guilt is awakened in him, he suffers, and loses his egotism. Albert is like the Mariner as he appears to the Wedding Guest. The Wedding Guest believes the Mariner to be a Spirit, dealing in unearthly matters, and says:

I fear thee ancient Mariner!  
I fear thy skinny hand!  
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,  
As is the ribbed sea-sand.
Albert is also feared as a wizard, and said to be "a gaunt slave prowling out for dark employments."\(^\text{12}\) The Mariner, who "passes like night from land to land," is called a "grey-beard loon" because his purpose opposes that of more ordinary men. Similarly, Albert is called "a runaway lunatic, ... [wandering] in the moonlight."\(^\text{13}\) The supernatural tale of each has a moral: the Mariner says, "this I tell/ To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!/ He prayeth well, who loveth well;" Albert says to Osorio, "One pang-/ Could I call up one pang of true remorse," and "I pray for the punishment that cleanses hearts."\(^\text{14}\)

Albert announces himself to Osorio as "He that can bring the dead to life again;" he awakens Osorio to moral life by bringing him to love his brother and Francesco, whom he had murdered, and to repent.\(^\text{15}\) The Mariner finds physical, spiritual and moral life in the midst of death after the spectre-woman, Life-in-Death, wins him in a dice game. He in turn awakens the Wedding Guest, who before the tale had yearned to join in the "merry din" of the wedding feast, afterwards "Turned from the bridegroom's door" with its "loud uproar," for he was "a sadder and a wiser man." A change of heart is accomplished in both the Wedding Guest and Albert because both, upon hearing the story of a guilty man, with a kind of "negative capability" put themselves into his position. Both the Mariner and Albert must suffer in telling their tale. The Mariner says,

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

\(^\text{12}\) II, i, 134.
\(^\text{13}\) II, i, 129, 132.
\(^\text{14}\) V, ii, 197; I, i, 328.
\(^\text{15}\) II, i, 140.
Albert cries out to Osorio "My anguish for thy guilt." Both have strange power to transfix their listeners with a glance. The Mariner "holds [the Wedding Guest] with his glittering eye," and the Wedding Guest says, "I fear thy glittering eye." Albert says to Osorio, "I fix mine eye upon thee, and thou tremblest."  

In spite of all these similarities between Albert and the Mariner, there are several major differences. Although Albert is thought to be a wizard with extraordinary powers and to be familiar with spirits, he is not; the Mariner does have experiences with spirits, and as a result of these experiences does have extraordinary power to entrance other men. The "supernatural" vision and powers of the Mariner perhaps more accurately could be termed supra-natural; for they are spiritual and moral. Another difference is that Albert seeks to make Osorio repent for particular deeds: the Mariner shows the Wedding Guest that a certain state of mind is evil, for all the crew are guilty. Osorio repents of his deeds: the Wedding Guest is awakened to "a bigger and better world." Further evidence of the increased scope of "The Ancient Mariner" is that more than half the poem explains details of the Mariner's vision after the snakes are blessed, whereas in Osorio there is little mention of the spiritual and moral vision of either Albert or Osorio. Osorio is the first work in which Coleridge indicates that rational thought and the process of association will not make man moral without an act of self-less will. The importance he placed on this discovery may explain why the

16 V, ii, 240.
17 V, ii, 185.
18 Poems, p. 186. Translation of the Latin phrase majoris et melioris mundi, in the motto to the poem.
whole drama depends upon the process of Osorio's repentance. The argument he puts in Osorio's mouth and then destroys — that reason and the instinct for self-preservation cause men to harm their fellows, therefore guilt is non-existent — is evidence of his own struggle with the concept of moral truth. Having settled this problem, he goes on in "The Ancient Mariner" to explore the results of the regeneration which is achieved through an act of will.

No direct mention of the dew image occurs in Osorio, although there is an image which takes its place. The wizard Albert lives in a setting much like that described in "Kubla Khan": there is "a small green dale" surrounded by a "faery forest" and hills, a mountain ash with scarlet clusters of fruit, like the incense-bearing trees in "Kubla Khan," a river with a "pumy cataract" throwing up mist and casting a shadow, and a house standing beside the river, as the pleasure-dome is beside Alph. The river in both poems, called "a sacred river" in the latter, could well be equivalent to the "crystal river of life" from which the Elect drink in "Religious Musings." Coleridge's statement in Biographia Literaria that in 1797 he was thinking of composing a poem about the river of life strengthens the probability that the river is a symbol of spiritual life. If so, then the river by which Albert lives could have the same function as the dew in the image-cluster used to describe the Mariner. Albert, drinking of this river, has a vision not possessed by Osorio.

In "The Wanderings of Cain" Coleridge created a figure with a physical appearance and mental state almost identical to that of the Mariner during his suffering. The poem concentrates on the experience

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19 Biographia Literaria, I, 145-161.

20 Biographia Literaria, I, 129.
which Cain undergoes. This is the first time it is obvious that the physical characteristics of the central figure are directly caused by his experiences. Having killed Abel, Cain is pursued and tortured by "the Mighty One who is against [him]." 21

"Enos ran before and stood in the open air; and when Cain, his father, emerged from the darkness, the child was affrighted. For the mighty limbs of Cain were wasted as by fire; his hair was as the matted curls on the bison's forehead, and so glared his fierce and sullen eye beneath: and the black abundant locks on either side, a rank and tangled mass, were stained and scorched, as though the grasp of a burning iron hand had striven to rend them; and his countenance told in a strange and terrible language of agonies that had been, and were, and were still to continue to be." 22

At this point Coleridge is quite clear about the nature of guilt. Both Cain and the Mariner murder out of self-interest, because they have "neglected to make a proper use of [their] senses," that is, have let self-interest prevent them from seeing the beauty and sanctity of all life. Like the Mariner, Cain sees the world (which Enos finds full of beauty and delight) as ugly and chaotic. He looks on the desolate scene around him, and

wonders what kind of beings dwell in that place - whether any created since man or whether this world had any being rescued from the Chaos, wandering like shipwrecked beings from another world. 23

Because of his deed Cain suffers under the burning sun, repents, then, bearing the marks of his suffering, wanders "like a shipwrecked being from another world," as does the Mariner. The "other world" of both is the world in which spiritual and moral suffering and regeneration occur. Coleridge projected an outline for the incompleted portion of the poem.

21 Poems, p. 289, ll. 45-46.
22 Poems, p. 289, ll. 60-69.
23 Poems, p. 286.
In this outline Cain, weary of life, comes upon a woman and children surrounded by tigers. Seeking death, he rushes in and drives away the tigers. Because of his action the woman and children find physical life-in-death, as did the Mariner when the spectre-woman appeared. Then "Cain addresses all the elements to cease for a while to persecute him, while he tells his story." Similarly, the Mariner is temporarily relieved while he tells his tale. Cain tells how he has been saved from inflicting blindness on himself; the Mariner tells how he has overcome the self-centeredness which had blinded him to the beauty of all God's creatures.

There is no dew image in the cluster describing Cain, probably because the poem is incomplete and Cain is never seen in his regenerate state. Although there is no clear reference to Cain's supernatural qualities, the experience he suffers is a supernatural one, in which he is tempted by evil spirits, is aided by the angel Michael, and gains a spiritual and moral vision. Instead of finishing the work, Coleridge wrote "The Ancient Mariner," which contains the same analysis of guilt, but a more detailed explanation of the process and results of regeneration.

The poet figure in "Kubla Khan" is similar to the Mariner. Coleridge says that if he could fully realize his poetic powers, he would build in the air a "sunny dome" and "caves of ice" like those of Kubla's paradise,

And all who heard should see them there,  
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!  
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.  

24 Poems, p. 286.

25 Poems, p. 298, ll. 48-54.
The similarity of the imagery with that of Cain and the Mariner - of the flashing eyes, floating hair, dew, and supernatural atmosphere - together with the above-mentioned similarity between Albert's abode in Osorio and Kubla Khan's pleasure-dome, suggest that there was some relation in Coleridge's mind between the figure of the enlightened man and the poet. The Mariner, Cain and the "Kubla Khan" poet have flashing eyes and floating hair as a result of their experience. The Mariner and the "Kubla Khan" poet are shunned by more ordinary people, for they have drunk a dew which has given them a "supra-natural" vision of the sunny dome of an enlightened existence. It seems likely that the "Kubla Khan" poet figure is a fusion of the Bard which appears in "An Effusion at Evening," and the spiritually and morally enlightened man in "The Ancient Mariner." By this time Coleridge believes that "a true system of Philosophy - the Science of Life - is best taught in poetry as well as most safely."26

Had "Christabel" been complete it is possible Geraldine would have the same function as the Mariner, that she would bring life-in-death, as do Albert, Cain, the spectre-woman, and the "Kubla Khan" poet. Geraldine is in many ways similar to the Mariner and to the spectre-woman, Life-in-Death. She spell-binds with her glittering eyes, she has long flowing hair, pure white skin and robes, and an aura of the supernatural. Like the spectre woman, she appears to Christabel when there is no wind. She is first welcomed, then feared as a vampire; similarly the spectre-woman is welcomed then feared by the Mariner as Death's mate. When Geraldine appears the poet prays for Christabel, "Jesu, Maria, shield her well!" as

26 Letters, IV, 461.
the Mariner prays, "Heaven's Mother send us grace!" Strangely enough, Geraldine brings blessings to Christabel, saying:

All they who live in the upper sky,
Do you love, holy Christabel?
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befel,
Even I in my degree will try
Fair maiden, to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie. 27

Further evidence that Geraldine is not purely evil is that she re-unites two old enemies, and has power over Christabel's guardian spirit. She comes to Christabel "Like a lady of a far countree," as the Mariner comes to the Wedding Guest "from a far countree," All these parallels suggest that in the relationship between Geraldine and Christabel, Coleridge may have intended to explain at greater lengths than he did in "The Ancient Mariner" the process of enlightenment in individual men, and their reactions to this process. If such were the case, one of the mysteries of "Christabel" would be explained - the mystery of Geraldine's dual nature. As the unregenerate Mariner and Christabel treat the spectre-woman and Geraldine, respectively, as both good and evil figures, so men frequently seem to welcome but finally reject enlightenment.

The second cluster of symbols in "The Ancient Mariner" is small but significant. The key symbol in this cluster is the killing of the Albatross. Because this act is central to the narrative of the poem, and the moral stanzas obviously refer to the act, any symbolic interpretation of the poem depends largely upon the implications arising out of the murder. Throughout the early poems which deal with evil and suffering Coleridge discusses murder, its causes and its consequences

upon society. He frequently relates the images of a bird and a cross to murder, as he does in "The Ancient Mariner." As his ideas mature from 1787 to 1798, a noticeable change occurs in his attitude towards murder, his explanation of its causes and his proposals for preventing it.

Several poems written during the first period, notably "Dura Navis," "The Progress of Vice" and "Honour," conclude with an act of murder. It is the final and worst act of men who consciously or inadvertently have become evil. During this period he accepted the traditional Church-of-England concept of man, that all fall from innocence into evil, that evil can not be completely overcome in this world, and that man must endure suffering, strive toward virtue and have faith that death brings heaven. In each of the three poems mentioned above, he states that once man begins the downward path - when "In some gay hour vice steals into the breast," - he will be led from bad to worse and at last find himself forced to murder, not because he so desires, but because of the pressure of circumstances. 28 Although the pleasures of evil-doing quickly cease,

stern Necessity will force
Still to urge on the desperate course.
The drear black paths of Vice the wretch must try,
Where Conscience flashes horror on each eye,
Where Hate--where Murder scowl--where starts Affright!
Ah! close the scene--ah! close--for dreadful is the sight. 29

In "Dura Navis" his explanation of the cause of murder is the same. An ambitious youth, seeking fame or pleasure, is like a sailor setting out on a voyage. He will encounter grievous storms, will engage in bloody warfare, then will be becalmed. He will be forced to quench his thirst

28 Poems, p. 12, l. 5.
with his own blood, and avoid starvation by cannibalism. Lots will be
drawn and the one fated to survive must "deep [his] dagger in the
friendly heart." The only way to avoid such experiences is to rest
at home, content with "meek-eyed Peace and humble Plenty." Here
Coleridge says that by refraining from ambition and pleasure-seeking,
and by striving after humble virtues, man will be able to avoid being
forced to murder, although he will not avoid all suffering. In "The
Ancient Mariner" Coleridge implies that the state of mind which leads to
murder is common to all - Mariner and crew. He stresses that man's
reaction to the evil he does is all important. In the early poems he
assumes that murder is a consciously committed act of evil, regretted
even before it is accomplished. In "The Ancient Mariner" he suggests
that murder can be committed quite casually, by one unaware of its
implications.

The political writings of 1794 and 1795, particularly The Fall of
Robespierre, "Destruction of the Bastille," and the political sonnets,
in general speak of tyranny as the greatest evil, and mass slaying as
the ultimate in tyranny. This was the cry of Godwin, who said that man
must be free so that the process of Necessity can perfect his moral
being. He argued that if man understands that the good of the individual
is identical with that of the group, he will not oppress and murder his
fellows. Progress towards perfection will be unhindered. Tyrants, not
understanding the best means to self-gratification, seek it by attempting
to procure private property from their fellows, oppressing and killing the

30 Poems, p. 4, l. 53.
the masses. In *The Fall of Robespierre*, a story of the progress of evil, Robespierre is shown to degenerate from murdering only the opponents of French liberty to murdering his former friends for self-aggrandisement. One of the true defenders of justice accuses him, saying:

Fall'n guilty tyrant! murder'd by thy rage
How many an innocent victim's blood has stain'd
Fair freedom's altar! ... that, thy foes removed,
Perpetual dictator thou might'st reign.31

Because he has misunderstood the true way to find happiness, Robespierre falls. In "Destruction of the Bastille" Coleridge states clearly his belief in the importance of freedom. He laments that "Power's blood-stain'd streamers fire the air" and looks forward to the day when "no fetter vile the mind shall know" and "Liberty the soul of Life shall reign."32 In these poems man murders because he misunderstands how best to benefit self. In 1797 and 1798 Coleridge believes that self-interest leads to murder.

In "Religious Musings" and "Destiny of Nations," Coleridge attributes evil to man's ignorance of the unity which God imparts to the world. Man is born innocent, but ambition and selfishness lead him into conflict with other beings. Unaware of the divine nature of all created beings he commits evil and will even murder to forward his own ends. Whereas in the earlier poems Coleridge had said that man kills, conscious of his crime but forced to commit it, now he says that:

... we roam unconscious, or with hearts
Unfeeling of our universal Sire,
And that in His vast family no Cain
Injures uninjured (in her best-aimed blow
Victorious Murder and blind Suicide)

31 II, i, 248-252.
32 Poems, p. 11, 11. 34, 27, 29.
Haply for this some younger Angel now
Looks down on Human Nature: and, behold!
A sea of blood bestrewed with wrecks, where mad
Embattling Interests on each other rush
With unhelmed rage!


Because all men are "Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole,"
murder becomes suicide, for to harm a part is to harm the whole. Here
are two anticipations of "The Ancient Mariner." First, murder is
committed because of failure to see beyond our own interests. Second,
in harming others we harm ourselves.

The image of the cross first appears in "Religious Musings," the
first poem in which Coleridge speaks about God as a loving Creator, and
about self-sacrifice as love. He says:

[Nothing in nature] E'er with such majesty of portraiture
Imag'd the supreme beauty uncreate,
As thou, meek Saviour! at the fearful hour
When thy insulted anguish winged the prayer
Harped by Archangels, when they sing of mercy!
... Lovely was the death
Of Him whose life was Love!


Christ's prayer on the cross was, "Father, Forgive them, they know not what
they do." As Christ, "whose life was Love," is the image of God, and "'tis
God / Diffused through all, that doth make all one whole," those who
crucified him unknowingly struck out against divine Love and the unity of
the universe. The spirits, whom the Mariner overhears discussing his crime,
suggest the similarity between Christ and the Albatross:

Is this the man?
By him who died on cross
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.
Christ was crucified by men unconscious that all creatures are "parts and proportions of one wondrous whole;" similarly, the Albatross was shot by a man unconscious that "the dear God who loveth us / He made and loveth all."

Although not explicit about which "doctrines of Christ" act upon man as a regenerative force, Coleridge does say:

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Lovely was the death
Of him whose life was Love!
Holy with power
He on the thought-benighted Sceptic beamed
Manifest Godhead.
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- R.M. ll. 28-31.

The implication is that, having crucified Christ, heard his "prayer on the cross" and seen his love, man becomes aware of sin. He then is led from fear of the consequences to hope for forgiveness, then to faith in God and finally to love of all created beings. Similarly, the Mariner recognizes his sin and is led from fear of the consequences to hope of being relieved by the spectre-ship, then to faith and attempted prayer and finally to a love of all creatures. However, in "The Ancient Mariner" Coleridge does not suggest that rational thought will make man moral, as he does in "Religious Musings." The Mariner before regeneration is not a "thought-benighted Sceptic," only a self-centered man. The regenerative process he undergoes does not lead first to God and then to love, but vice-versa.

An obscure and incomplete passage in "The Destiny of Nations" establishes a seabird as a symbol of divine love and the unity of all life, and murderous tyranny as opposition to this love and unity. Questioning the cause of the slaughter of her people, Joan of Arc is told:

---

33 Poems, p. 108, n.1; p. 110, ll. 34-39.
Of chaos the adventurous progeny
Thou seest; foul missionaries of foul sire,
Fierce to regain the losses of that hour
When Love rose glittering, and his gorgeous wings
Over the abyss fluttered with such glad noise,
As what time after long and pestful calms,
With slimy shapes and miscreated life
Poisoning the vast Pacific, the fresh breeze
Wakens the merchant-sail uprising. Night
An heavy unimaginable moon
Sent forth, when she the Protoplast beheld
Stand beauteous on Confusion's charmed wave.

- D.N. 11. 280-291.

The reference seems to be to creation, when the Holy Spirit, traditionally symbolized as a hovering sea-bird, "moved upon the face of the deep," which was "without form and void." Evil forces are attempting to overthrow the form and order which God gave the Universe at creation. These spirits have gained some success, for they are:

in Camps and Courts adored,
Rebels from God, and tyrants over mankind.
- D.N. 11. 313-314.

The suffering and death Joan sees is thus explained as opposition to the seabird, symbol of God's love and unifying power.

Osorio also links murder to the crucifixion. Osorio's regeneration begins when he remembers that Albert, whom he attempted to murder, was "the very image of Deity." At the moment of repentance he says of Francesco, whom he did murder, "He would have died to save me and I kill'd him!" Like those who crucified Christ, Osorio kills the image of deity and rejects love. A major difference between Osorio and the Mariner is that one kills out of conscious malignity, the other quite casually. This difference indicates the sophistication of Coleridge's thought during the intervening months.

34 V, ii, 261.
"The Wanderings of Cain," like Osorio and "The Ancient Mariner," is based on an act of murder. As noted above, the similarity of the sufferings of Cain to those of the Mariner argues a similarity in the concepts underlying the poems. The major addition to the theme of murder is Cain's statement that it is the result of not making a proper use of his senses, that is, of "filling all things with himself" and therefore being unable to see beauty in God's creatures.

The involvement of the crew in the Mariner's guilt by their justification of the murder is foreshadowed in "Fears in Solitude," written just before "The Ancient Mariner" was completed. In this poem Coleridge accuses the British of guilt in the French Revolution because of their assent or indifference to the crimes being committed. His argument is that, like the crew, the British are too sensual to be aware of the moral implications of the war: their emotions are titillated by the newspaper reports of its horrors; they discuss the battles and relate them to their own situation, heedless of the sufferings of the soldiers. In the same way the crew discuss the death of the bird only as it affects the weather. The English even speak of war in religious terms, actually justifying or condemning as it suits them, but pretending to base their decisions on religious principles. Just so, the crew first welcome the bird in God's name, then alternately bless and curse it, as suits their personal interest. So doing they pervert religion to superstition, until "the very name of God sounds like a juggler's charm."^35 When they suffer because of their sin they refuse to acknowledge their guilt:

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^35 Poems, p. 259, ll. 79-80.
Fondly they attach
A radical causation to a few
Poor drudges of chastising Providence
Who borrow all their hues and qualities
From our own folly and rank wickedness,
Which gave them birth and nursed them.\textsuperscript{36}

They are "Dupes of a deep delusion" and "play tricks with conscience,
dare not look / At their own vices."\textsuperscript{37} "In their sore distress, \{the crew\} would fain throw the whole guilt on the Mariner; in sign whereof
they hang the dead sea-bird about his neck."

The similarities between the early poems and "The Ancient Mariner"
make an interpretation on the Mariner's deed fairly obvious. It is
symbolic of the evil within man which causes him to destroy other beings
for self-gratification. It is parallel to the crucifixion: man strikes
out against God and his fellows, although perhaps not intentionally or
even knowingly. But in spite of the fact that man "know not what they do,"
guilt remains, punishment follows.

Not accepting guilt, man may die without knowing why he has suffered,
as do the crew. Release from suffering cannot be attained by change of
environment, only by a denial of self. Then a new perspective is achieved
in which the once ugly environment suddenly appears beautiful and lovely.
However, it will not remain that way unless the individual continues to
admit guilt, lose his egocentricity and discover higher visions. To

Coleridge,

Christianity regards morality as a process - it finds
a man vicious and unsusceptible of noble motives; and
gradually leads him, at least desires to lead him, to
the height of disinterested virtue.... There is no
resting place for morality.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36} Poems, p. 262, ll. 166-171.
\textsuperscript{37} Poems, p. 261, ll. 158-159.
\textsuperscript{38} Letters, I, 283.
Not all of the third cluster of images in "The Ancient Mariner" - the nature images - appear with regularity in the earlier poems. However, the major images of sun, moon, wind, rain and ocean do. The patterns established in the earlier poems provide a basis for interpretation of the major symbols and provide a guide for interpretation of the lesser symbols.

A characteristic common to all the nature imagery in "The Ancient Mariner" is duality. The sun at times causes savage thirst, at times sends "sweet sounds" to the Mariner; the moon at times is mist-obscured, at times is bright and beautiful; the wind is sometimes a storm blast, other times a refreshing breeze; the rain is sometimes a drenching, annoying mist, but also comes as a life-saving dew; the sea at times appears rotting and slimy, at times is calm and full of "happy living things." The negative, destructive aspect of nature is generally evident before the Mariner's death-wish, and the positive, creative aspect afterwards. This duality also occurs in the earlier poetry. There, too, it is related to Coleridge's concept of good and evil. As his ideas mature from 1787 to 1798 the implications of the dualism become increasingly similar to those in "The Ancient Mariner."

The earliest poems use nature imagery to describe the moral state of man, as well as the physical health and poetic success of Coleridge himself. In "Easter Holidays" he likens the happiness of innocent children to the joy of Eastertide,

When Nature's clad in green:
When feather'd songsters through the grove
With beasts confess the power of love
And brighten all the scene.39

---

In contrast, the "woe" and "ills in Fortune's power" which age brings are "raging storms." In "Sonnet to the Autumnal Moon" the image used to describe hope is the moon, "Mild Splendour of the various-vested
Night! / Mother of wildly-working visions." When hope wanes the moon is "Behind the gather'd blackness lost on high." In "Pain" the poet says that during good health, "the Morn's first beams, the healthful breeze, / All Nature charm, and gay [is] every hour," but during ill health, no "fragrant bower / Can glad the trembling sense of wan Disease."

"An Effusion at Evening" speaks of the poetic imagination as having power

\[
\text{o'er Winter's icy plains to fling}
\]
\[
\text{Each flower, that binds the breathing Locks of Spring,}
\]
\[
\text{When blushing, like a bride, from primrose Bower}
\]
\[
\text{She starts, awaken'd by the pattering Shower.}
\]

Having lost his imaginative power, the poet is like

\[
\text{the Savage, who his drowsy frame}
\]
\[
\text{Had bask'd beneath the Sun's unclouded flame,}
\]
\[
\text{Awakes amid the troubles of the air,}
\]
\[
\text{The skiey deluge, and white lightning's glare -}
\]
\[
\text{So tossed by storms along Life's wild'ring way}
\]
\[
\text{Mine eye reverted views that cloudless day,}
\]
\[
\text{Sees shades on shades with deeper tint impend}
\]
\[
\text{Till chill and damp the moonless night descend.}
\]

In these early poems Coleridge establishes the habit of using opposing extremes of nature imagery to portray innocence and guilt, happiness and despair, poetic creativity and poetic sterility. When in his later poems he began to explore these themes more deeply, he readily adapted this technique to his own purposes.

\[40\text{Poems, p. 49, ll. 9-12}
\]
\[41\text{Poems, p. 53-54, ll. 71-74, 77-78, 105-106.}\]
In "Religious Musings" Coleridge uses dualism of nature imagery to compare the Elect to the Many. The process by which the Elect become regenerate is like the experience of a shepherd, when he

on a vernal morn
Through some thick fog creeps timorous with slow foot, Darkling he fixes on the immediate road His downward eye: all else of fairest kind Hid or deformed. But lo! the bursting Sun! Touched by the enchantment of that sudden beam Straight the black vapour melteth, ...

... And wide around the landscape streams with glory.

- R.M. ll. 94-100, 104.

In earlier poems he had also described opposite states of mind in terms of opposite states of nature. But in "Religious Musings" he goes one step further, and says that the regenerate man has a spiritual perspective enabling him to see beauty and glory in nature hidden to the unregenerate man:

He from his small particular orbit flies With blest outstarting! From himself he flies, Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze Views all creation; and he loves it all, And blesses it, and calls it very good.


The difference between the dualism here and that in "The Ancient Mariner" is that here man must find God before he can see beauty in nature. In the later poem, man loses his self-centredness, is then able to see beauty in nature, and therefore loves God.

"The Nightingale" is the poem in the third period which most clearly states that nature seems unlovely because of man's self-concern:

In Nature there is nothing melancholy, But some night-wandering man whose heart was pierced With the remembrance of a grievous wrong, Or slow distemper, or neglected love, (And so, poor wretch! filled all things with himself, And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale Of his own sorrow). 42

42 Poems, p. 264, ll. 15-21.
"Dejection: an Ode," written four years later, explains the duality of nature in a similar way:

... we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud.
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ahl from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth -
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element.\(^4\)

At the birth of the Mariner's soul, the beginning of the Life which he finds after the Death of his egocentric, sensual self, he suddenly discovers nature is "full of love and joyance."

Those nature images in "The Ancient Mariner" which appear in the earlier poems are used with a remarkable consistency of reference between 1787 and 1798. In almost every place where nature imagery occurs there is a strong sun-moon opposition, the sun symbolizing reason or non-spiritual, non-imaginative perception; the moon, creativity and imagination; wind or storm, a force bringing spiritual life and vitality; dew, spiritual vision or imaginative power; the ocean, human existence. As Coleridge's concepts of evil and the nature of man changed, slightly different emphasis was put on these symbols. However, the core meaning of each did not change radically.

The key nature images of Coleridge's poetry were first established in "Songs of the Pixies" and "An Effusion at Evening." Both poems are primarily concerned with poetic imagination. In both, imagination is active during the moonlight, sterile during the sunlight. The pixies,
who subsist on "fragrant dews," bring "soothing witcheries" to the poet and "twine the future garland round his head," cavort only in the moonlight. They say,

But not our filmy pinion
We scorch amid the blaze of day,
When Noontide's fiery-tressed minion
Flashes the fervid ray. 44

Here the sun is only a negative force.

"An Effusion at Evening" more clearly associates night imagery with the poetic imagination. The poet seeks "Imagination, Mistress of [his] Love" as the sun sets. She is characterized by "dewy brilliance dancing in her Eyes" and she drinks "Joy's red Nectar." "She meets [the poet's] lonely path in moon-beams clad." He wishes he had a wizard's power in order that he might shield her "from noon-tide's sultry beam" and thus keep her with him during the day. Once again the sun is only a negative force, preventing the working of the imagination. It could well represent mundane reality, or the petty details of daily life mentioned in the motto to "The Ancient Mariner." The wind is a dual force: during the moonlight it is an "Evening Gale" bringing "shadows of delight" and "a Dream by night;" during the day it is "a tempest's sweep," bringing difficulties into the poet's life. These difficulties become so great that the poet loses his imagination and "sees shades on shades with deeper tint impend, / Till chill and damp the moonless night descend." 45

Rain also has a dual function, coming in the form of dew during a moonlit night, but as a "skiey deluge" during the day. None of these images seem to have an obvious symbolic value. Coleridge merely uses them to strengthen

44 Poems, p. 41, ll. 21-24.
45 Poems, p. 50, ll. 67-68.
the visual aspect and the mood of the poems. However, he does use the ocean as a symbol of society in "Dura Navis," saying that an ambitious youth is like a sailor setting out on a voyage. It is better, he says, to rest content at home than to attempt to achieve fortune and fame in society.

During the second period, 1794 - 1796, the same key nature images again appear, except the moon. Rather than being set in the night, as "Songs of the Pixies" and "An Effusion at Evening," the major poems of this period are set in the sunlight. A probable reason is that during these years Coleridge accepted the rationalism of Godwin and Hartley, and used the sun as a symbol of reason. The moon would be familiar to his readers as a symbol of the imagination, if only because it was so frequently used that way by other eighteenth-century poets. Tuveson says,

> The world of Pope is indeed one of brilliant light, with, mostly, an absence of chiaroscuro, and it is likely that the association of brilliantly illuminated images with the understanding rather than with the imagination helped cause the romantic reaction in favour of the night scene. Certainly, it was not long before the moon became a symbol of the imagination.\(^{46}\)

Therefore he could not adapt it to any other purpose. Through reason Godwin and Hartley both hoped to teach men the value not only of freedom but also of love, for reason leads men to truth, truth to freedom and love. Coleridge occasionally uses the sun as a symbol of the freedom and truth which is discovered through reason: he speaks of "freedom's noon-tide ray" and the sunshine of "bright Reality," and in a notebook entry of 1796 he specifically says "Reason the Sun."\(^{47}\) In "The Destiny of Nations" he argues that just as


The Laplander beholds the far-off Sun
Dart his slant beam on unobeying snows,
- D. N. ll. 65-66.

so ignorant minds discover truth through a process leading from fancy to
self-control, then to superstition and reason.

... For Fancy is the power
That first unsensualizes the dark mind,

Till Superstition with unconscious hand
Seat Reason on her throne;

Till from Bethabara northward, heavenly Truth
With gradual steps winning her difficult way,
Transfer their rude Faith perfected and pure.
- D. N. ll. 80-81, 87-88, 124-126.

In the same poem he anticipates the Millenium, saying,

Soon shall the Morning struggle into Day,
The stormy Morning into cloudless Noon.
- D. N. ll. 453-454.

During the Millenium, reason shall prevail, superstition perish, and
"this period will be followed by the passing away of this Earth and our
entering the state of pure intellect." 48 Whenever Coleridge refers to
night during this period he speaks of moonless nights of total darkness,
in which superstition and tyranny reign. The wind is a symbol of divine
energy in "The Eolian Harp." He surmises:

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all? 49

The wind appears as an "ambrosial gale" bringing to the Elect in
"Religious Musings" "strange bliss" from "the crystal river of life."

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48 Poems, p. 122, 1.359 n.
49 Poems, p. 102, ll. 44-48.
It is also a storm sent by God to destroy the great evil men of the world in order to make way for the Millenium. In the same way, the storm in "The Ancient Mariner," and later in "Dejection: an Ode," seems destructive, but prepares the way for a higher vision, or a "mountain birth." It drives the Mariner southward to the place where he can begin to grow. In "Ode to the Departing Year" the wind also appears as a symbol of divine power. Coleridge addresses "the Divine Providence that regulates into one vast harmony all the events of time" as the wind, the "Spirit who sweepest the wild harp of time."  

Perplexed by the failure of freedom to establish morality among the French and British, he cries, "It is most hard, with untroubled ear/ Thy dark inwoven harmonies to hear." In "The Ancient Mariner" he no longer visualizes the wind as symbolic of a power which works toward the perfection of society on a mass scale. After the water snakes were blessed the wind blew on the Mariner alone—not on the ship or the re-inspirited crew.

In several places throughout the poetry of the second period the ocean is a symbol of society. When speaking of the tyranny, ignorance and superstition plaguing society, Coleridge describes the ocean in much the same way as it appears to the Mariner when he is suffering. God's influence upon the world is

As what time after long and pestful calms,
With slimy shapes and miscreated life
Poisoning the vast Pacific, the fresh breeze
Wakens the merchant-sail uprising.


Without God's control the world is "Confusion's charmed wave." Coleridge hopes that individuals such as Joan of Arc will free society from its

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Ibid.
ignorance of God. She is like

the healing God [Apollo],
When from his bow the arrow sped that slew
Huge Python. Shriek'd Ambition's giant throng,
And with them hissed the locust-fiends that crawled
And glittered in Corruption's slimy track

-D. N. 11. 435-439.

In "The Ancient Mariner" the slimy snakes are not Ambition
and Corruption, but natural creatures, actually beautiful but seeming
corrupt because of the Mariner's limited vision. Twice in 1795
Coleridge pictures the ocean as calm and beautiful, filled with life.
Both times, in "The Eolian Harp" and "Reflections on Having Left a Place
of Retirement," he attains a vision of the unity of all life, and of the
presence of God in nature. The similarity of the symbolism here to
that in the third period again indicates that he was in the habit of
associating particular images with particular concepts, and that when, in
"The Ancient Mariner," he was attempting to teach the "Science of Life,"
these images were readily adapted to fit his needs.

None of the poems in the second period is truly a symbolic poem,
for none contains a simple narrative which can exist alone. All
attempt an explicitly rational explanation of a set of concepts. Imagery
and symbolism are used only to assist the poet graphically to represent
his ideas. This is why the symbolism is not developed in detail.
In the third period of his work Coleridge relies primarily upon symbolism
to convey his meaning.

It is not surprising to find that, having discovered reason is not
the key to moral truth, Coleridge emphasizes the negative qualities of
the sun, or reason, and the positive qualities of the moon, or imagination,
in those poems of the third period concerned with morality: Osorio, "The Wanderings of Cain," "Christabel" and "The Ancient Mariner." At this point the moon is a symbol of more than the poetic imagination, for in the light of the moon moral growth occurs. Albert, who "brings the dead to life again" in Osorio, accomplishes his work in the moonlight; Osorio commits his evil deeds on a moonless night; Cain suffers on a sterile desert of "hot rocks and scorching sands," then in the moonlight attempts to rescue strangers from death and is granted a measure of relief from his suffering; Christabel meets Geraldine, who although she seems evil brings blessing, in the moonlight. In "The Ancient Mariner" moonlight is also a time of growth. During moonlight the bird is shot by a man without spiritual vision; just as the sun goes down and before the moon appears the spectre-woman comes, announcing Life-in-Death for the Mariner; the crew die in the moonlight, having failed to admit their guilt; during moonlight the Mariner blesses the snakes, sleeps gently, and awakes refreshed by dew. During the moonlight also the ship begins the journey home, the spirits are overheard by the Mariner, the ship reaches the bay. Finally, the Mariner himself passes "like night from land to land," bringing life-in-death to other men. Coleridge hints in Biographia Literaria that "The Ancient Mariner" is a story of the workings of the imagination, particularly the secondary imagination, which is "vital," struggling "to idealize and unify."52 Such could well be the case, for the Mariner achieves life-in-death by discovering a concept of God and love through losing his self-concern and identifying himself with the unity which God

52 Biographia Literaria, I, 202.
imps, it results from the moon's influence. Accepting this interpretation of the moon, we can explain the Mariner's act, which occurs when the moon is obscured in mist, as a failure of the creative imagination to see a bigger and better world beyond the petty details of daily life, making a similar failure but refusing to accept guilt, the crew die. The creative imagination controls all life, as the moon controls the ocean:

Still as a slave before his lord
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.

If the sun is a symbol of reason in "The Ancient Mariner," as in the earlier poetry, then the suffering and thirst of the crew is caused by the failure of reason to provide moral insight or spiritual vision. The worst suffering is endured when reason is most dominant, when "the bloody Sun, at noon,/ Right up above the mast did stand." The ship must be driven to the line, the apex of reason, before growth can begin. Reason at its height fails, and imagination, the moon, takes over. Once growth does begin through an imaginative act, reason still struggles to control the voyage, as the sun struggles to fix the ship to the ocean on the return voyage. Reason must continue to submit to imagination if growth is to continue.

The rain and wind as symbols respectively of spiritual vitality and of the force which brings all men to the place of reckoning between reason and imagination, body and spirit, are now readily accounted for in the
poem. To the purely rational mind, spiritual life seems to have no value; yet such a mind is sterile: to the crew rain came only in the form of fog and mist, obscuring both sun and moon; without rain, they died. In a significant passage in *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge says, "the writings of the mystics ... contributed to keep alive the heart in the head; gave me an indistinct yet stirring and working presentiment, that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of Death."\(^53\) Having abandoned the purely rational, the Mariner is filled with new vitality. "By the grace of the holy Mother, the ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain;" To the purely rational mind of the sensual man, the wind seems a destructive force, as it is to the forces of evil in "Religious Musings." However, it drives both Mariner and crew to the place where reason, put to the ultimate test, fails. In this way, the wind is finally a force for good, because it prepares the way for the imagination to begin its work. Not accepting their guilt, not yielding to the imagination, the crew die, while the Mariner goes on to be filled with new life brought by that same wind. In a similar situation Cain cries out:

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The Mighty One that persecuteth me is on this side and on that; he pursueth my soul like the wind, like the sand-blast he passeth through me; he is around me even as the air.\(^54\)
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By this wind Cain is driven to the point of self-negation at which he rescues others from death, thereby bringing relief to himself. In "Dejection: an Ode" wind has the same function, being a "dull, sobbing draft, that moans and rakes/ Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute [the poet]" for Coleridge, who has lost his "shaping spirit of Imagination," but having the potential of a "mountain-birth" for Sara.

\(^53\) *Biographia Literaria*, I, 98.

\(^54\)*Poems*, p. 288, ll. 33-35.
A survey of the conditions under which the key images and symbols in "The Ancient Mariner" appear throughout the early poetry points out several trends. First, Coleridge relies upon a few major images and symbols, adapting them to his purposes as his major ideas change and mature. This consistency argues for a unity among his major poems: the ideas of each are closely related. Moreover, his consistency in the use of certain images and symbols provides a reliable guide for interpretation of "The Ancient Mariner." Finally, due partly to the clarification of his ideas, partly to progress in craftsmanship, the imagery and symbolism become more distinct, and a more integral part of his poetry from 1787 to 1798.
Chapter 3
Form in Poetry: The Magic Circle

Form in poetry may be defined as the relationship of the parts to each other and the whole. The parts of a poem are the thoughts and feelings it contains, as well as the various means by which they are expressed: diction, imagery, metre, rhyme and stanza form. Coleridge defined a poem in terms of its form:

But if the definition sought for be that of a legitimate poem, I answer, it must be one, the parts of which mutually support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement.¹

Three kinds of form exist in a poem: external form, technique and internal form. The external form, or framework, is the relation between various ideas in the poem; between octave and sextet of a sonnet, narrative elements of a story, strophe and antistrophe of an ode; between beginning, middle and end. The technique of a poem is the relation of the mechanical elements - diction, imagery, metre, rhyme and stanza form - to each other and to the thoughts and feelings they express. The internal form of a poem is the relation between the degree of thought and the degree of feeling. Ideally, the thought and feeling of a poem should be of equal intensity, should balance.

Because internal form is a seldom-recognized and fugitive aspect of poetry, it deserves further explanation. Thought can vary from superficial ideas, such as the idea in "Nil Pejus est Caelibe Vita" that the life of a bachelor is lonely, to complex ideas, such as the concept of

¹Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross, 2 vols. (London, 1907), II, 10. Frequent reference to this work in the following pages will be facilitated by use of the abbreviation B.L.
necessity in "Religious Musings." Feeling can vary from a casual emotional
twinge, such as the trivial humour in "Monody on a Tea-kettle," to consum­
ing passion, such as the sense of guilt expressed in "The Pains of Sleep."
However, the deep thought which Coleridge believes to be an essential
ingredient of great poetry is a sense of spirituality in the midst of
social and political turmoil. It is the conviction that every aspect of
human experience is related to ultimate truth, which is found in God. Deep
feeling, the second essential ingredient of great poetry, is the love which
concerns itself with the changes in each individual man. All good poetry
has a balance between the degree of thought and the degree of feeling:
norther one is disproportionate. A poem which has complex ideas but little
emotion, or intense emotion but trivial ideas, is a poor poem because the
parts are disproportionate. The greatest and best poetry stimulates the
reader to deep thought - to spirituality - and simultaneously to deep feel­
ing - a love of man. As the reader thinks deeply, he is deeply moved; as
he feels deeply, he thinks deeply.

Coleridge's concept of poetic form is related to his belief that
pleasure is the immediate end of poetry.

A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to
works of science, by proposing for its immediate object
pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having
this object in common with it) it is discriminated by
proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is
compatible with a distinct gratification from each compon­
ent part.²

What is it that gives pleasure?

The sense of beauty is intuitive, and beauty itself is all
that inspires pleasure without, and aloof from, and even
contrarily to, interest.³

²B.L., II, 10.
³B.L., II, 257.
What, then, is the sense of beauty?

The sense of beauty subsists in simultaneous intuition of the relation of parts, each to each, and of all to a whole: exciting an immediate and an absolute complacency, without intervenence, therefore, of any interest, sensual or intellectual. In each aspect of form—external form, technique, and internal form—the parts must be harmoniously related each to each and all to the whole. They must mutually support and explain each other. The place of form in poetry is aptly described in Coleridge's statement:

Pleasure is the magic circle out of which the poet must not dare to tread.

When any part is not integrally related to the whole, or is under-emphasized or over-emphasized, then unity is weakened and the reader's sense of beauty is disturbed. The poet has stepped out of the magic circle of pleasure.

A test of the validity of Coleridge's concept of pleasure is that only as he became successful in handling each of the three kinds of form, and of relating them to each other, and the whole, did his poetry become successful.

In the earliest poems he achieved a degree of success in handling the external form, or structure of a poem. "Easter Holidays" begins with a reference to Easter and springtime, then draws a parallel between the joy of springtime and the joy of youthful innocence; it introduces a contrast between youth and the misery of age and experience, then draws to a climax by admonishing virtue and wisdom in defence against misery; in the conclusion the fruit of virtue and wisdom is compared to the bliss of Easter, with which the poem began. Each major idea is related to the others, and all to the unifying statement on morality. The poem is well-structured.

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4 "B.L., II, 239.

5 Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, ed. Thomas M. Raysor (London, 1930), II, 43.
on the Death of Chatterton," one of the longest and most complex poems of the first period, also has a successful framework. It begins with praise of Chatterton and sorrow for his death, and concludes with a wish that Coleridge will equal Chatterton's successes but resist evil more firmly. The middle contains a list of the qualities which Chatterton had and Coleridge desires to emulate, and also a list of the difficulties Chatterton succumbed to but which Coleridge must overcome. He seizes the occasion to lament social injustice and indicate his Christian faith, but both topics are clearly related to the major themes. The emotions of sorrow, praise, and aspiration are all closely related. In these and other poems of the earliest period, 1787-1794, Coleridge exhibits an inborn sense of structural form.

His sense of structure is more evident in the poems of the second period, 1794-1796, for they contain, generally speaking, a far greater number of elements. The Argument to "Religious Musings" contains a list of the topics Coleridge included in a single poem:


It is true that many of these topics contain obscurities, but this is due to immaturity of thought rather than poor structure. Each one is put in a Christian context, and is related to each other topic. The poem begins with praise of God, then moves from the birth of Christ to his relation to God, his crucifixion, his effect on individuals, the necessity for

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regeneration, the source and nature of evil, the results of evil in the present, the ultimate overthrow of evil during the Millenium, and finally, to praise once again, ending on the same note on which it began. In spite of obscurity in the ideas, the framework is well unified.

The frameworks of other poems in this period are notable, not because they unify a wide scope of ideas, but because they unify a great many details. "To a Young Friend" is an allegory comparing the poet's search for knowledge and inspiration to the ascent of a mountain. As the poet and a friend climb the mountain, many details of the landscape are compared to various difficulties and delights encountered in the search for knowledge; none command so much emphasis that they detract from the overall unity, none seem out of place.

The poems of the third period, 1797-1798, have a unity in framework which, because of their symbolic nature, is still more outstanding. A symbolic poem must have a unified framework both on the primary level - the narrative - and on the secondary, or symbolic level. In "Religious Musings" Coleridge had to provide structural unity on only one level. He occasionally used images to make ideas which had already been explicitly stated more vivid. For instance, he says that the regeneration of the Elect is similar to the experience of a shepherd walking out of a fog bank. However, in "The Ancient Mariner" not only the primary level of the poem -- that of the story-within-a-story -- must be well-unified, but also the secondary level - that of the Mariner's spiritual growth. The structural framework of the two levels must be super-imposed. The poet cannot make only a few elements of the narrative symbolic, as he does in "Religious Musings," where he uses imagery only for convenience. If the Mariner's voyage is symbolic of the stages in the growth of a soul, then every
incident on the voyage must have a parallel in the growth of a soul, otherwise the second level will lack unity. The demands made on the poet's inherent sense of form in this case are far greater than in a simple, single-level poem such as "Songs of the Pixies." Of course the rewards for the reader are far greater also, for if pleasure results from the recognition of unity in multeity, then the more elements contributing to the unity, the greater the sense of pleasure.

It is true that the total unity of the symbolic level is not obvious immediately, nor, indeed, ever. However, if the magic circle of the poem is successful, and if the reader is made to sense that a symbolic level does exist, on which the poet discusses universal truth, then he will be drawn back to the poem to discover what it really says. As he finds the relation of various parts of the poem to the symbolic level, discovering an increasingly greater unity, he achieves more pleasure.

The extent of Coleridge's ability to present a well unified structure on both primary and secondary, or symbolic, levels is evident in "The Ancient Mariner." The poem has a distinct beginning, middle and ending, and the story-within-a-story structure is well handled. The poem opens with a meeting between the Mariner and the Wedding-Guest, closes with their parting; the mood of the Wedding-Guest at the beginning is contrasted to that at the end; the progress of the wedding is referred to not only at the beginning and end but also several times throughout the narration of the Mariner's tale. The relation between the two stories is made evident when at the end of his tale the Mariner explains why he has seized the Wedding Guest and forced him to listen. The Mariner also explains his attitude to weddings and to the Church. Throughout the narration of the Mariner's tale the reader is reminded of the presence of the Wedding Guest and of his
responses to the tale, so that not only is the framework of the "exterior" tale well structured, but the two tales also are well integrated. The Mariner's tale is also well structured. It is the story of a voyage which begins at home in the sunlight, follows a clearly-traced route, and returns home in the moonlight. All the events which occur, whether natural phenomena or supernatural incident, are related to the progress of the voyage.

On the symbolic level the poem is also well-unified. It is the story of the growth of a human soul. The nature of man before and after growth, the cause, process, and result of growth, and the role of the enlightened man in society are all integral elements of the Mariner's experience; all arise out of the simple narrative. The poem has that peculiar quality of great literature: each time the reader returns to it he discovers another element of truth; he discovers further ramifications of the poem's unity.

Few, if any, of Coleridge's poems have a poor framework. His innate sense of structure appears in his earliest poems and becomes more evident in his later ones. Such is not true about the technique of his poetry. The early poems abound with affected diction, unnatural imagery, forced metre and rhyme, and stanza forms unsuited to or dominant over the thoughts and feelings. The success of his technique in 1797 and 1798 is the result of much effort and of adherence to a few key principles.

The Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* states that the poets have attempted "a natural delineation of human passions, human characters and human ideas." The statement is a crude attempt to explain the way in which the techniques should express the thoughts and feelings of a poem. It foreshadows the later concept of unity in multeity to the extent that it recognizes the importance of the relationship between technique and
thought and feeling. The intent of the statement must be applied to each of the techniques of poetry, with the aid of comments in *Biographia Literaria*, in order to understand its full significance.

Diction is a primary element of poetic technique. Wordsworth and Coleridge announced in the Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* that they were attempting to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure [and to avoid] the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers.

Perceiving the imprecision of this statement, and particularly of Wordsworth's later explanation of ideal poetic diction as "the REAL language of men," Coleridge writes in *Biographia Literaria* that a poet should use the language of "good sense and natural feeling." He goes on to say:

I object...to an equivocation in the use of the word "real." Every man's language varies, according to the extent of his knowledge, the activity of his faculties, and the depth of quickness of his feelings. Every man's language has, first, its individualities; secondly, the common properties of the class to which he belongs; and thirdly, words and phrases of universal use. ...For "real" therefore, we must substitute ordinary, or *lingua communis*.

The first principle of poetic diction, then, is that it be the ordinary language of men, language readily understood by all classes of men.

The second principle of poetic diction is that it consist of an austere purity of language both grammatically and logically; in short a perfect appropriateness of words to the meaning.

In saying that diction must be perfectly appropriate to the meaning, Coleridge is echoing a precept urged upon him by Boyer, his childhood schoolmaster:

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7 *B.L.*, II, 41.
8 Ibid.
9 *B.L.*, II, 115.
Whatever lines can be translated into other words of the same language, without diminution of their significance, either in sense, or association, or in any worthy feeling, are so far vicious in their diction.10

This precept suggests that there is no particular poetic diction, that the language commonly used by the middle and lower classes is no more appropriate for poetry than that used by the upper classes. The only requirement of poetic diction, as long as it is lingua communis, is that it be perfectly appropriate to the thoughts and feelings it is conveying. Coleridge was trying to avoid

the characteristic faults of our elder poets, and the false beauty of the moderns. In the former, from DONNE to COWLEY, we find the most fantastic, out-of-the-way thoughts, but in the most pure and genuine mother English; in the latter, the most obvious thoughts, in language the most fantastic and arbitrary.11

In neither case is the diction perfectly adapted to the thoughts. Unity in multeity does not exist and the magic circle of pleasure is not strong.

The phrases "pure and genuine mother English" and "the ordinary language of men" do not rule out colloquialisms or, in the case of "The Ancient Mariner," archaisms. If either are perfectly suited to the meaning and have dramatic propriety, they are valid. In a letter of 1797 Coleridge comments to Southey:

In the ballad of Mary, the Maid of the Inn, you have properly enough made the diction colloquial - but 'engages the eye,' applied to a gibbet strikes me as slipsloppish - from the unfortunate meaning of the word 'engaging.'12

If a ballad contains the speech of a rustic character, colloquialism is justifiable. But a word which might convey the wrong associations must not be used, no matter how grand that word sounds. Grand words

10B.L., I, 4-6, 14.
11B.L., I, 15.
and phrases may be used effectively in some cases, but in others will
detract from unity in multeity:

Wordsworth ... has most ably contended for a reform-
ation in our poetic diction, in as far as he has
evinced the truth of passion, and the dramatic
propriety of those figures and metaphors in the
original poets, which, stripped of their justifying
reasons, and converted into mere artifices of connec-
tion or ornament, constitute the characteristic falsity
in the poetic style of the moderns. 13

As if anticipating that the archaisms in "The Ancient Mariner" would be
condemned as gaudy and inane, or at least not the language of conversation
of the middle and lower classes of society, Coleridge says in the Advertise-
ment:

The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere was professedly
written in imitation of the style, as well as of
the spirit of the elder poets; but with a few excep-
tions, the Author believes that the language adopted
in it has been equally intelligible for these three
last centuries.

Here he submits to both criteria for poetic diction later to appear in
Biographia Literaria. The diction is commonly understood, genuine mother
English, and is dramatically appropriate, or well suited to the meaning.

Changes were made in the diction in later editions of the poem, but
not because Coleridge found these principles inadequate. The changes were
of two kinds. Words such as "weft," "lavrock" and "eldritch," which were
likely to go unrecognized and therefore weaken the imagery, were omitted
or changed. Archaic spellings of words in frequent use were modernized -
"ee" to "eye," "ancyent" to "ancient," "Marinere" to "Mariner," "yspread"
to "spread" - so that the attention of the reader would not be distracted
by their irregularity. However, archaic words not then in common use but
likely to be recognized, such as "bemocked," "kirk," and "quoth," and

13 B.L., II, 28.
archaic words not likely to be recognized but not vital to the imagery or narrative, such as "eftscons," remained, for they were in keeping with the archaic style and subject matter of the ballad. He removed that which detracted from and retained that which contributed to unity in multeity.

Imagery, closely related to diction, is governed by similar principles. First, there should be a

perfect truth of nature ... [such that] the image is distinguished from the reality only by its greater softness and lustre... [for] genius neither distorts nor false-colours its objects.\(^{14}\)

An example of a poor image is found in the line:

And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire.

Coleridge criticizes such an image as incongruous, "because it confounds the cause and the effect, the real thing with the personified representative of the thing; in short, because it differs from the language of GOOD SENSE.\(^{15}\)

Imagery must first of all be natural.

Second, imagery must be related to all other parts of the poem:

It has been before observed that images, however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit.\(^{16}\)

Once again Coleridge refers to the magic circle, saying that unless there is a nice proportion between imagery and the other parts of the poem, unity in multeity will not exist, and pleasure - the magic circle - will not occur.

\(^{14}\)B.L., II, 121.

\(^{15}\)B.L., II, 58.

\(^{16}\)B.L., II, 16.
Metre and rhyme, together a part of versification, also are governed by the principle of unity in multeity. They give pleasure by their very nature, but this alone is insufficient:

And as a particular pleasure is found in anticipating the recurrence of sounds and quantities, all compositions that have this charm super-added, whatever be their contents, may be entitled poems.17

Versification which is not well adapted to the thought and feeling detracts from unity. Shakespeare's poetry conforms to the second requirement of versification:

In the "Venus and Adonis," the first and most obvious excellence is the perfect sweetness of the versification; its adaptation to the subject; and the power displayed in varying the march of the words without passing into a loftier and more majestic rhythm than was demanded by the thoughts, or permitted by the propriety of preserving a sense of melody predominant.18

Versification has a vital role, for it is the language of emotion, and emotion is an essential ingredient of poetry. However, emotion must be related to thought:

Metre in itself is simply a stimulant of the attention, and therefore excites the question: Why is the attention to be thus stimulated? Now the question cannot be answered by the pleasure of the metre itself: for this we have shown to be conditional, and dependent on the appropriateness of the thoughts and expressions, to which the metrical form is superadded.19

An example of versification failing to support the thought is found in "Shurton Bars," a serious love poem:

O ever present to my view!
My wafted spirit is with you,
    And soothes your boding fears:
I see you all oppressed with gloom
Sit lonely in that cheerless room—
Ah me! You are in tears!20

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17 B.L., II, 9.
18 B.L., II, 14.
19 B.L., II, 53.
20 Poems. p. 97. 11. 7-12.
Here the thoughts are forced into strict rhyme and metre, and therefore seem ridiculous. The reader looks for emphasis at the end of each line because of the versification, but finds no justification for emphasis. In contrast, the conversational poems of 1797 and 1798 contain no rhyme, and metre only as it is suited to the conversational tone and diction. In these poems Coleridge felt strict versification to be a hindrance, so almost neglected it. In "Dejection: an Ode" he went a step further, using conversational tone and diction, but adapting them perfectly to metre and rhyme. In such cases,

when everything [is] expressed just as one would wish to talk, and yet all [is] dignified, attractive and interesting; and all at the same time [is] perfectly correct as to the measure of the syllables and the rhyme... even the gratification which the very rhymes afford, becomes then no longer a contemptible or trifling gratification.

In a preface to "Christabel" Coleridge announces that he is utilizing a new principle in his metre in order further to accommodate the versification to the other elements of the poem.

I have only to add that the metre of Christabel is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless, this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the ends of mere convenience, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion.

So doing he is attempting to free the metre from restrictions which hinder naturalness of expression; he is attempting to strengthen the magic circle through unity in multeity.

Coleridge made few comments about the use of stanza form. However, examples taken from his own poetic practise indicate that he applied the principle of unity in multeity to stanza form also. The use of stanzas

21 Vide "This Lime-Tree Bower," "Frost at Midnight," "The Nightingale."
22 B.L., II, 70.
provides order, or unity, thereby contributing to the pleasure derived from poetry. But if the stanza dominates rather than harmonizes with the thoughts and feelings of the poem, the magic circle will be weakened. For instance, in "Easter Holidays" the insertion of "Verse 1st," "Verse 2nd," etc. preceding each stanza, intrudes upon the meaning of the poem, making the reader disproportionately conscious of the order of the poem. Coleridge's innate sense of structure prevented glaring discrepancies between stanza form and meaning in his poetry. In poems such as "The Rose" and "Shurton Bars," which adhere throughout to a certain number of lines per stanza, he makes a noticeable shift in thought in each stanza. In poems such as "Songs of the Pixies," and "The Eolian Harp" and "This Lime-Tree Bower," which have no standard stanza length, he varies the length according to the thought pattern. The harmony between stanza-length and thought and feeling is particularly noticeable in "The Ancient Mariner." Most of the stanzas contain four lines, but when the ideas require more space, one or two lines are added. In such cases unity is strengthened by rhyming the last line with one or more of the first four. For example, in the stanza:

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul,

the thought in the last line is an important part of the stanza. The five lines could not be reduced to four without losing some of the meaning, nor could they be expanded into eight without including unnecessary material and overemphasizing the ideas. By rhyming the fifth line with the second, unity is strengthened.

A comparison of the opening stanza of the 1790 version of "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" with that of the 1829 version will indicate the
relative success of Coleridge's technique before and after the formulation of his poetic theory. The early edition begins:

Now prompts the Muse poetic lays,
And high my bosom beats with love of Praise;
But, Chatterton! methinks I hear thy name,
For cold my Fancy grows, and dead each Hope of Fame. ²⁴

First, the diction - notably, "lays" and "methinks" - is not *lingua communis*. Being ambiguous, it is not perfectly adapted to the thought: does Coleridge love to praise others, or to be praised himself? The imagery is both unnatural and unsuited to the thought. It is as incongruous to say "high my bosom beats" as it is to say "For cold my Fancy grows" when introducing a poem about another man's death. The metre is also unsuited to the thought and feeling of the poem. The strict, iambic-tetrameter opening line is far too forceful and too bright for a monody, which is akin to the elegy and dirge. Moreover, the stanza length is not well adapted to the ideas it contains. The two main ideas are that the poet is eager to write, and that the name of Chatterton inhibits his poetic powers and therefore dampens his hope for personal glory. There is no hint of why the name of Chatterton should have this effect, nor of how these ideas are related to the title. The stanza does not contain sufficient ideas.

In contrast, the opening stanza of the 1829 version is:

O WHAT a wonder seems the fear of death,
Seeing how gladly we all sink to sleep,
Babes, Children, Youths, and Men,
Night following night for threescore years and ten!
But doubly strange, where life is but a breath
To sigh and pant with, up Want's rugged steep. ²⁵

Here the diction is perfectly natural, with the possible exception of the phrase "threescore years and ten." However, this is a well known Biblical

²⁵Poems, p. 125, ll. 1-6.
quotation, and is always used to refer to the allotted life-span of man. On both counts it is justifiable poetic diction: it is readily understood, and is adapted to the thoughts. The images are also both natural and adapted to the thought. "To sink to sleep" is a commonly used expression, and aptly describes a common sensation; moreover, sleep traditionally is related to the idea of death. The image of panting "up Want's rugged steep" fits well with the idea of the breath of life, and also with sleep and death as the cessation of panting. The versification is also well adapted to the thought and feeling. The tone is subdued and conversational, and the metre is appropriately subdued; it is irregular, and yet provides emphasis on key syllables:

Night following night, for threescore years and ten.

The rhyme does not overshadow the thoughts by forcing emphasis where it cannot be born, yet adequately unifies the stanza. The stanza length is suited to the thoughts also, neither breaking them off irrationally, nor forcing unneeded lines. Each aspect of technique supports the unity of the poem.

Although Coleridge made great strides in poetic technique from 1787 to 1798, his poetry did not excel until he mastered the third element of poetic form: "internal" form, or the fusion between thought and feeling. Once again the two principles of truth to nature and unity in multeity apply.

Thought and feeling will be true to nature only if, as the Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* suggests, poetry deals with "human passions, human characters, and human incidents." Coleridge rephrases the principle in *Biographia Literaria*, saying that "the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature" is a cardinal
point of poetry. If poetry is to be successful it must say something about that which is common to all men, about universal truth. The poet may choose a local situation - his particular love affair - but he must not choose exclusively local emotions and ideas. "To a Young Ass" is a poor poem because the emotion in it is not universal. Few men can look at a jackass and say, "I hail thee Brother." Similarly, "Sonnet to Priestley" is a poor poem because its main idea - that institutionalized religion is evil - is not universal truth. "The Ancient Mariner" is a good poem partly because it contains thoughts and feelings recognized as true by all men. The statement:

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!

would be contravened by none.

To the objection that by using supernatural agents and incidents in "The Ancient Mariner" he was departing from the truth of nature Coleridge answered:

the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency.27

The thoughts are true to nature to the extent that all men at one time or another have imagined themselves under supernatural agency. The feelings are correspondingly true.

In order for unity in multeity to exist in a poem or for the parts to harmonize with each other and the whole, the thoughts and feelings must be proportionate. A chief weakness of the poems of 1787-1794 is their "idle

26 BL, II, 6.
27 Ibid.
Passion and unreal Woe." They rely for their force upon emotion alone. For instance, he frequently writes soulfully of his childhood days, but puts little more in the poems than a nostalgic description of the countryside, and a concluding lamentation:

Visions of Childhood! oft have ye beguil'd
Lonely manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs:
Ah! that once more I were a careless Child!

In other poems, such as "Genevieve," "The Gentle Look," "Ave, Atque Vale!" and "Imitated from the Welsh," he moans over adolescent love affairs but makes no perceptive comments about love, as he does in the "The Dark Ladie" in 1799:

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.

When, in 1794, he began to direct his poetry towards serious truth he fell into the other extreme, and relied chiefly upon the ideas in the poems. He attempted to avoid the "effeminacy of sentiment and faulty glitter of expression" of his earlier work, but made an equally severe error by putting into his poems ideas so complex as to be incomprehensible.

"The Destiny of Nations,"

Infinite Love,
Whose latence is the plenitude of All,
Thou with retracted beams, and self-eclipse
Veiling, revealest thine eternal Sun.

Almost as obscure is a passage in "Religious Musings;"

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29 Poems, p. 48, ll. 12-14.
31 Letters, I. 205.
Contemplant Spirits! ye that hover o'er
With untired gaze the immeasurable fount
Ebullient with creative Deity!
And ye of plastic power, that interfused
Roll through the grosser and material mass
In organizing surge!


Ideally, poetry should contain "a correspondent weight and sanity of the
Thoughts and Sentiments," or fusion of thought and feeling. If a poem
contains either

an intensity of feeling disproportionate to such
knowledge and value of the objects described, as
can fairly be anticipated of men in general,
or

a disproportion of thought to the circumstance
and occasion,
then the reader can not be expected to sympathize with the poet.

Multeity in unity will not exist, pleasure will not be derived.

As there are varying degrees of thought and of feeling, so poems
will vary in the degree of thought and of feeling they contain. They may
be good poems, whether the degree of thought and feeling is small or large.
But they will always be poor poems if thought and feeling are disproportio­
tionate.

All poetry must contain a fusion of thought and feeling, but the
greatest and best poetry is characterized by deep thought and deep feeling.

No man was ever yet a great poet without being at the
same time a profound philosopher. For poetry is the
blossom and the fragrancy of all human knowledge,
human thoughts, human passions, emotions and language.

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32 B.L., II, 118.
33 B.L., II, 109.
34 B.L., II, 19.
How are deep thought and deep feeling defined? In a tribute to Wordsworth Coleridge says:

It was not however the freedom from false taste...which made so unusual an impression on my feelings immediately, and subsequently on my judgement. It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world. ... In poems, ... genius produces the strongest impressions of novelty, while it rescues... from the impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission... truths of all others the most awful and mysterious.

Coleridge seems to say that deep thought is awareness of the depth and height of the ideal world, and deep feeling, the tone, or the atmosphere of that world. The phraseology is similar to that in the motto to "The Ancient Mariner," which states that the purpose of the poem is to enable the reader to contemplate the image of a bigger and better world.

Coleridge is more precise when, after stating that Wordsworth's poetry generally contains a correspondent weight and sanity of the thoughts and feelings, he adds that it also contains deep thought and deep feeling.

Fifth: a meditative pathos, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility; a sympathy with man as man; the sympathy indeed of a contemplator,... from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature.... The superscription and the image of the Creator still remain legible to him under the dark lines, with which guilt or calamity had cancelled or cross-barred it.

Here "deep and subtle thought" is the contemplation which discovers "the superscription and image of the Creator" in man - a sense of spirituality - and "the sameness of the nature" of all men - in other words, truth of human experience. Deep feeling, or "sensibility," seems to mean "a sympathy with

35_B.L., I, 59-60.
36_B.L., II, 118.
37_B.L., II, 122-123.
man as man," or love. Once again "The Ancient Mariner" theme appears:

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

Coleridge believed that "truth, either moral or intellectual, ought to be the ultimate end of poetry," and also that religion is "both the cornerstone and key-stone of morality." Therefore the poem which contains moral truth must have religious implications: its thought must involve a sense of God, its feeling must involve love.

Some critics do not believe that "The Ancient Mariner" expounds universal moral truth. John Livingstone Lowes says:

For the "moral" of the poem, outside the poem, will not hold water. It is valid only within that magic circle. ... The imaginative use of familiar moral values, like the imaginative use of the familiar outline of a voyage, is leagues away from the promulgation of edifying doctrine through the vehicle of a fairy tale.

Irving Babbitt would agree with Lowes. He says the poem does not conform to the test of poetry set up by Aristotle - to instruct as well as to please:

That "The Ancient Mariner" is good in its own way - almost miraculously good - goes without saying. The reason for thinking that this way is inferior to the way envisaged by Aristotle is that it is less concerned with moral choices in their bearing on the whole problem that finally matters - that of happiness or misery.

However, in the Biographia Literaria Coleridge states that man's happiness or misery lies precisely in the understanding at which the Mariner arrived - that there is a unity in all of life:

38 B.L., II, 9; I, 135.
39 The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination (Boston, 1930), p. 300.
40 "A Sham Moral," in Gettmann, p. 66.
I will conclude with the words of Bishop Jeremy Taylor:
he to whom all things are one, who draweth all things to
one, and seeth all things in one, may enjoy true peace
and rest of spirit.\footnote{I, 194.}

As early as "Religious Musings" Coleridge relates this concept of unity to
the spiritual awareness the Mariner comes to:

\begin{quote}
'Tis the sublime of man,
Our noontide Majesty, to know ourselves
Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole;
***
This fraternises man, this constitutes
Our charities and bearings.
\end{quote}


When the Mariner discovers that he is part and proportion of one wondrous
whole, he finds true peace and rest of spirit; when he gains a sense of
spirituality he also discovers love.

In several poems written before "The Ancient Mariner" the elements of
deep thought and deep feeling appear, but are not successfully handled.

Coleridge tells in "Reflections" of climbing a mountain and looking out over
the surrounding countryside:

\begin{quote}
It seem'd like Omnipresence! God, methought,
Had built him there a Temple: the whole World
Seem'd imag'd in its vast circumference:
No wish profan'd my overwhelmed heart.
Blest hour! It was a luxury, - to be!\footnote{Poems, p. 107, ll. 38-42.}
\end{quote}

Here is the same discovery the Mariner makes: God gives a unity to all
creation. The Mariner, after the snakes are blessed, also has no selfish
desires, no wish, and feels that it is "a luxury, - to be!"

\begin{quote}
I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light - almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a bessed ghost.
\end{quote}
However, in the "Reflections" poem Coleridge stops short of the Mariner's experience, for his sense of unity does not include other men. He feels that imperfections in the external world of political and social environment will prevent other men from partaking in this unity until the Millenium. He says:

And that all had such!
It might be so - but the time is not yet.
Speed it, O Father! Let thy Kingdom come.43

In the 1803 edition of his poems he omitted these last lines, aware that a change must occur only in the minds of individual men before they can discover this unity. Here, he goes on to speak about the importance of true humanitarianism, but concludes by saying that the best way to love men is to "fight the bloodless fight / Of Science, Freedom, and the Truth in Christ."44 So doing he turns from deep thought - the sense of spirituality in spite of political and social turmoil - and the deep feeling, love, which naturally follows when man sees all creatures, in their present circumstances and miserable though they be, as part of divine order.

"The Eolian Harp" also contains a hint of the deep thought and deep feeling in "The Ancient Mariner." The poet says:

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all?

Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so fill'd.45

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As in "Reflections," Coleridge concludes by rejecting the deep thought:

These shapings of the unregenerate mind [are]
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.46

In "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," "France: an Ode," and "Fears in Solitude," all written in 1797 or 1798, deep thought - a sense of God - and deep feeling - love, occupy a major thematic role. However, in none does Coleridge as successfully create a fusion of these elements as in "The Ancient Mariner," in none does the reader recognize as many truths of human experience; in other words, in none is the multitude in unity as complex. In "The Ancient Mariner" alone is there as much truth about the nature of human growth, the relation between the physical and spiritual aspects of man, and the causes of growth. Correspondingly, in none of the earlier poems is the reader awakened to feeling as deep as that in "The Ancient Mariner."

Why does Coleridge use symbolism to convey the deep thought and deep feeling in "The Ancient Mariner," rather than attempt an explicit presentation of truth, as in "Religious Musings?" The answer is complex, and is based on his statement: "An idea, in the highest sense of that word, cannot be conveyed but by a symbol."47 The final end of great poetry is to convey truths of nature, but as ultimate truth can never be totally encompassed, a poet can only strive to express it. Therefore, a poem is a symbol of truth - the highest ideas - for it expresses, or represents truth. A reader should feel that the poem is to be read on two levels, the story level and the symbolic level, on which the actions of the story level are translated into

46 Poems, p. 102, 11. 55-57.
47 B.L., I, 100.
terms of universal human experience. He should feel that each element in
the poem is symbolically used. The more he submits to the poem, the more
he discovers the truth it seeks to express. But he can never exhaust a
great poem - one which most successfully expresses universal truth - any
more than he can exhaust truth.

In order to be successful, a symbolic poem must give the reader a
sense that it says something more than is evident on the primary level, the
narrative. The reader then returns to the poem - drawn by the pleasure he
has been given by the order of the poem or the relation of the parts each
to each and all to the whole - seeking to discover further elements con-
tributing to the poem's unity, seeking more pleasure.

Not the poem which we have read, but that to which we
return, with the greatest pleasure, possesses the
genuine power, and claims the name of essential poetry.\d\n
Charles Lamb said of "The Ancient Mariner:"

The tale should force upon us [the credit] of its truth.
For me, I was never so affected with any human Tale.
After first reading it, I was totally possessed with it
for many days ... the feelings of the man under the
operation of such scenery dragged me along like Tom
Piper's magic whistle.\n
If the magic circle is strong, if the poet's taste in framework, technique
and internal form is perfect, fusing all elements of the poem into a unity,
then the reader will be bewitched and will return to the poem, as did
Charles Lamb. But he will return, not merely for the narrative, but for
the higher truths which he will ever continue to find.

The reader should be carried forward, not merely or
chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by
a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but

\d\n\d_{E L}, I, 14.
\d_{Gettmann}, p. 47.
by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself. Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power. 50

If a poet attempts an explicit presentation of particular aspects of truth, rather than a symbolic expression of universal human experience, then he does not conform to the first rule of poetry. His immediate end is truth, not pleasure. Although truth is the ultimate end of poetry, the communication of pleasure is the introductory means by which alone the poet must expect to moralize his readers. 51

Pleasure may result from the attainment of truth, though the poet choose not to use symbolism, it is true. Yet such may be the case in prose, also. This is not to say that every poem must be symbolic, for not every poem embodies deep thought and deep feeling; not every poem has truth for its ultimate end. "[The communication of truth] will distinguish the character of the author, not the class to which the work belongs." 52

Changes which were made in "The Ancient Mariner" between the 1798 and the 1832 edition can be explained as attempts to strengthen the magic circle, either by removing things which hindered the unity of the poem, or by emphasizing the symbolic patterns. As mentioned above, archaic spellings were removed, along with words not likely to be recognized by most readers. Archaic spellings would seem unnatural to the reader, unknown words would weaken the imagery; both would hinder unity in multeity. Images which were too local and vivid were also removed, because they made undue claim upon the reader's attention without being vital either to the narrative or to the

50 B.L., II, 11.
51 B.L., II, 105.
52 B.L., II, 9.
symbolic levels of the tale. Lines such as

Nay, if thou'st got a laughsome tale,
Mariner come with me.

and

Now get thee hence, thou grey-beard Loon,
Or my staff shall make thee skip.

as well as those describing Death, and those describing the re-inspirited crew members were removed or altered. In several places Coleridge changed the initial letter of a word from capital to small print, if capitalization seemed unusual, as it did in the phrases "Mist and Snow" and "Ice mast-high." So doing he removed another potential distraction.

A number of changes were made to strengthen the symbolic level. The title of the poem in the 1800 edition was changed to "The Ancient Mariner, A Poet's Reverie." Lamb objected, saying:

What new idea is gained by this Title, but one subversive of all credit, which the tale should force upon us, of its truth?\(^{53}\)

To him the phrase "A Poet's Reverie" suggested that the poem contained no moral truth. Lest the symbolic level of the poem be minimized, Coleridge removed the phrase. The Argument of the 1798 edition contained only a summary of the journey. In 1800 it was expanded, emphasizing the moral significance of the Mariner's deed by inserting the words:

how the Ancient Mariner, cruelly, and in contempt of the laws of hospitality, killed a Sea-bird; and how he was followed by many strange Judgements.

The gloss, added in 1817, takes the place of the Argument. Without making an explicit reference to the symbolic level of the tale, it emphasizes key points of action - such as the crew's role in the murder - and thereby strengthens the symbolic pattern. Another important addition in 1817 was

\(^{53}\)Gettmann, p. 47.
the quotation taken from Burnet. Because it is in Latin, it is overlooked by the casual reader. Only the persistent searcher discovers the directions it gives regarding the moral truths of the poem: Coleridge has given us, as in a picture, the image of a bigger and a better world. The motto does not break into the narrative pattern of the poem, but confirms the existence of a symbolic level to those readers concerned to enquire.

The problem of the moral stanzas can be explained in terms of the narrative and symbolic levels of the poem. One objection to these stanzas is that neither the casual shooting of a bird nor the Mariner's discovery that that which seems ugly in one state of mind can seem beautiful in another, provide sufficient ground for a moral interpretation of the poem. Coleridge seems to support this objection when he says:

But as to the want of a moral, I told [Mrs. Barbauld] that in my own judgment the poem had too much; and that the only, or chief fault, if I may say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination. It ought to have had no more moral than the Arabian Night's tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well, and throwing the shells aside, and lo! a genie starts up, and says he must kill the aforesaid merchant because one of the date shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son.  

However, a more plausible explanation of this statement is that Coleridge feels the moral endangers the magic circle of pleasure by obtruding "so openly" on the reader. Ideally, the reader should discover the symbolic level without having to be told of its presence. Moreover, a "tacked on" moral may give the reader the impression that there is no symbolic level

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54 Gettmann, p. 66-67.
at all, that the poem is merely a simple story with a simple message about
loving all things. Then why did Coleridge not remove the moral stanzas?
Perhaps because he felt the symbolic level of the poem was not strong
enough. The message was obscured by the vehicle carrying it. This also
would explain the necessity of the gloss and the Latin motto. He says,
significantly, that he began to write

"The Dark Ladie," and the "Christabel," in which I should
have more nearly realized my ideal, than I had done in my
first attempt.  

Coleridge found the supernatural particularly adaptable to the purpose
of his poetry - the communication of truth by means of pleasure - because
it readily engages the interest of most readers, and because it readily
awakens the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom.

Of all intellectual power, that of superiority to the fear
of the invisible world is the most dazzling. Its influence
is abundantly proved by the one circumstance, that it can
bribe us into a voluntary submission of our better knowledge,
into suspension of all our judgement derived from constant
experience, and enable us to peruse with the liveliest
interest the wildest tales of ghosts, wizards, genii, and
secret talismans. On this propensity, so deeply rooted in
our nature, a specific dramatic probability may be raised by
a true poet, if the whole of his work be in harmony [here
enters the magic circle concept]: a dramatic probability,
sufficient for dramatic pleasure, even when the component
characters and incidents border on impossibility. The poet
does not require us to be awake and believe; he solicits us
only to yield ourselves to a dream; and this too with our
eyes open, and with our judgement perdue, behind the curtain,
ready to awaken us at the first motion of our will: and
meantime, only, not to disbelief.

The reader is dragged along like Tom Piper's magic whistle, as was Lamb,
but as soon as he perceives the symbolic level of the poem his judgment is

55 B.Lz, II, 6.
56 B.Lz, II, 189.
awakened by his will, and he seeks the universal truth in the poem.

The supernatural is also suited to convey certain moral truths. In a letter of October, 1797, Coleridge says:

Romances, & Relations of Giants & Magicians, & Genii... [give] the mind a love of 'the Great' & 'the Whole.'

The Mariner finds himself awakened to a love of the great and the whole, as he tells the Wedding Guest in the moral stanzas. Coleridge attempts to convey the same truth to the reader, and uses the supernatural to awaken the reader's mind. The motto from Burnet, added in the 1817 edition, makes his purpose quite clear:

I readily believe that there are more invisible beings in the universe than visible. ... there is profit, I do not doubt, in sometimes contemplating in the mind, as in a picture, the image of a bigger and better world: lest the intellect, habituated to the petty details of daily life, should be contracted within too narrow limits and settle down wholly on trifles.

Coleridge and Wordsworth were interested in awakening their readers to truth. For Coleridge one of the most important truths was the "one life" concept - the sense of a bigger and better world of spirituality in the midst of political and social reform.

In other poems he was also experimenting with the supernatural as a means of awakening the mind. In Osorio, Albert, a "wizard," fabricates a supernatural scene, using stage effects, in order to awaken Osorio to his guilt by shocking him. Coleridge inserted a manuscript note criticizing the scene:

The scene is not wholly without poetical merit, but it is miserably undramatic, or rather untragic. A scene of magic is introduced in which no single person on stage has the least faith - all, though in different ways, know it to be a trick.

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57 Letters, I, 354.
58 Gettman, p. 1
59 III, i, 115 n.
The scene fails because the emotions of the characters are not dramatically true; none has faith in the magic, but they act as though they do. The reader cannot suspend disbelief because the elements of the poem do not harmonize. The magic circle is broken, and the poet cannot teach his reader. In "The Ancient Mariner" the reader recognizes the truth of the Mariner's reactions, and involves himself in the Mariner's experience (achieving poetic faith); as a result he is subject to the Mariner's discovery of truth, together with the Wedding Guest.

"The Three Graves" is a ballad about the effect of a mother's curse on the mind of her daughter. Coleridge says it is a story

"providing striking proof of the possible effect on the imagination, from an idea violently and suddenly impressed on it ... and illustrating the mode in which the mind is affected in these cases."60

His claim for the poem is that "its merits, if any, are exclusively psychological."61 There is dramatic truth in the poem, in the reactions of the characters to each other, but its major weakness is a lack of deep thought and deep feeling. In an explanatory note to a translation of Gottfried, Coleridge again comments on the value of the supernatural in awakening the reader to a sense of spirituality:

Most interesting is it to consider the effect when the feelings are wrought above the natural pitch by the belief of something mysterious, while all the images are purely natural. Then it is that religion and poetry strike deepest.62

For Coleridge, the ultimate end of poetry is moral truth, and religion is the cornerstone and keystone of morality. Because the supernatural can aid the poet in awakening the mind to the "one life" concept basic to religion and morality, it is suitable for the purposes of poetry.

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60 Poems, p. 269.
61 Poems, p. 267.
62 Poems, p. 306.
Coleridge also found the ballad form well suited to his poetic methods and purposes. As ballads are traditionally folk songs, carried by word of mouth and often added to by individual singers, they did not lend themselves to the vicious affectation common to the diction of much eighteenth-century poetry. They used the real language of men, or more precisely, *lingua communis*. Ballads are traditionally based on factual experiences, that is, they deal with human passions, human characters, and human incidents. The supernatural is frequently the subject matter of ballads. Therefore, the readers would not think it unusual to find supernatural incidents and agents appearing in "The Ancient Mariner." The ballad characteristic most valuable for Coleridge's purposes is montage. Montage is a story technique in which only key points of action are supplied in the narrative. Minor details are left for the reader to supply. This heightening of incident with omission of detail requires full participation of the reader in the imaginative experience. Reader participation encourages the willing suspension of disbelief which Coleridge thought highly important if the poet is to teach. Furthermore, montage is suited to symbolism, for by heightening key incidents it makes vivid impressions upon the mind of the reader. Drawn back to the poem in a search for higher truth, the reader will be assisted by these vivid impressions. Repetition, another ballad characteristic, also assists the poet to emphasize the symbolic level, first by its hypnotic effect drawing the reader into the poem, then by emphasizing certain symbolic patterns. Repetition in the lines:

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Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide seal
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first draws the reader's attention to the intensity of the experience - hypnotizes him - then imprints the experience on his mind, making it available for a later search for symbolic incidents.
Although Coleridge found supernatural subject matter, ballad form and the symbolic method readily adaptable to his concept of poetry, the principles of pleasure and unity in multeity are not limited to any particular subject matter, form or method. They are principles which govern each of the three aspects of form - external form, technique and internal form - in all poetry. Only when all the parts of a poem are harmoniously related each to each and all to the whole has the poet created a successful magic circle of pleasure and so satisfied the first requirement of poetry.
"The Ancient Mariner" is the result of a ten-year apprenticeship in ideas, imagery and symbolism, and poetic form. Sensitive to the evil and suffering he saw about him, Coleridge explored the solutions offered by traditional morality and by eighteenth-century rationalism. Disillusioned, but always an eclectic, he added to the more valid ideas of each a belief that the will of the individual is the key to morality. "The Ancient Mariner," a poem of the growth of a soul, teaches that morality exists as a state of mind in individual men, and is a sense of spirituality combined with a love for all beings.

Coleridge early established a set of images and symbols which he used to facilitate expression of his thoughts and feelings. As his ideas changed, he adapted these images and symbols to suit them. Three major clusters of images and symbols in "The Ancient Mariner" describe the Mariner, his murder of the Albatross, and his vision of the universe before and after growth. By tracing the implications of these images and symbols throughout the early poetry it is possible to arrive at a consistent and reliable interpretation of them in "The Ancient Mariner."

The principle of unity in multeity governs form in poetry. Always adept at external form—the unity of the various thoughts and feelings in the framework of a poem—Coleridge had to struggle for mastery of the other aspects of form: technique and internal form. The technique of a poem is unified if its various elements—diction, imagery, metre, rhyme and stanza
form—are the best and most natural expression of the thoughts and feelings. The internal form of a poem—the relation between thought and feeling—is unified when the degree of thought is proportionate to the degree of feeling, each giving rise to and supporting the other. Only when all parts of a poem mutually support and explain each other will the reader be able to recognize unity in multitude and so achieve pleasure, which is the immediate end of poetry. "The Ancient Mariner," in common with the greatest and best poetry, not only is unified, but also contains a fusion of deep thought—a sense of God—and deep feeling—love. It has achieved the ultimate end of poetry, which is moral and intellectual truth.
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